

TWO TRACKS ACRES NEWSLETTER

March 2015



Here we go. I hear the sandhill cranes cackling outside my window and I know it's time to hit it hard again. Winter has been slow, as usual, and I am eager to get to the longer days and faster pace of summer. We have a couple changes in our routines this year. I am no longer at Capella Farm, but am working part time at Tantre Farm (organic veggies) and as the Chelsea farmers market manager. Taik is working construction, and in the evenings we come home and do what we love best: Two Tracks Acres.



DANGER ON THE ICE

The spring chores are upon us: tilling, pruning fruit trees, seeding peppers, lettuce, kale and collards, and my favorite: cleaning out the chicken coop. We had some trouble this winter watering the animals because the water iced over so quickly. At Tantre, the workers chop a hole in the lake everyday by the cow pasture so that the cows may drink. One evening while we were hacking at the ice, a cow got too close to the hole and slipped, falling straight into the water! The hole we were digging was far out on the lake, so it was too deep for her to get a good footing to push herself out. The cow hung onto the lip of the ice, with her lower half submerged while we scrambled to figure out what to do. I called the owner and he came to the rescue with a sturdy tractor and belt, which we wrapped around her, using the tractor to pull her out. After that episode, we dug the watering hole closer to shore, so if an accident happened again, the cows could just walk out of the shallow water on their own.

WHAT'S NEW WITH FOOD

We have many pigs this spring, which will give us a lot of meat for the summer. I need to order chicks soon, and the egglayers have started cranking out eggs again now that the days are longer. We still don't have a trailer, so I rely on the goodwill of our fellow, more experienced farmers to help us out with equipment loans. A couple of interesting developments in the food community:

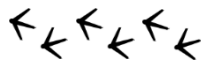


- Tillian, the farm incubator program in Ann Arbor, has more beginning farmers than ever with all kinds of businesses including beekeeping, a salad mix CSA, dried beans, hot peppers destined for the Brinery's sriracha sauce and many more new and interesting projects.
- The Washtenaw County Food Hub has its community kitchen up and running, and will soon feature a little market with some local products. They've acquired more land and want to start investing in perennial habitats such as fruit and nuts.
- Farmers have a new set of food safety regulations to follow in the Food Safety Modernization Act that was just finalized. Although signed into law in 2011, they were still taking comments up until this winter. This is the most sweeping reform in our food safety law in the past 70 years, and focuses on the production (the farmers) side of things.
- Argus Farm Stop, a store that sells local products located on Liberty, in Ann Arbor, is rocking out a new model for selling produce. The store products are kept stocked by the farmers themselves, like a farmers market that's open all the time. From their website <http://www.argusfarmstop.com>

Argus provides local producers with a new and different way to sell their products, allowing them to sustain and expand their businesses.

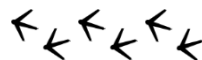
- *Products are OWNED AND PRICED by the producer (no brokers or intermediaries allowed) so customers know where their food comes from.*
- *80% of the selling price goes back to the producer where it belongs.*
- *We enable customers to buy from multiple farmers and producers in a single easy transaction.*

Check it out if you're in the neighborhood.



FARMERS MARKET

Once again we will be at the Chelsea Farmers Market on Saturdays this summer. Market runs 8am-noon starting May 6. We'll have chicken, pork, eggs, and a small amount of vegetables in late spring. Pork cuts include breakfast sausage, Italian sausage, ham, pork chops, shoulder roasts, and bacon. The first vegetables of the year will be lettuce, radishes, spinach and salad mix. Everything is all natural – no nitrates or preservatives for the meat, and organic practices for growing veggies.



PICTURES FROM THE FARM



Hoophouse frame – still waiting on the plastic



The first sprig of garlic



Kale stalks with heads eaten off by deer



The truck after a trip through the muddy field



Up to 16 eggs per day



Oops – looks like we spilled a little feed

Thanks and be well!