

TWO TRACKS ACRES NEWSLETTER

June 2013



GOODBYE BARN

Once the pasture began to grow we needed to move the pigs from the barn to the field. It's a far stretch from point A to point B, and we don't have a trailer for hauling around the animals. We debated over how to make the big move, and finally decided to try bribery. Taik and I took buckets of the most delicious scraps and showed them to the pigs. We pulled down the fence and slowly lead them to the new enclosure. Each time one tried to wander off, I would waive the scrap bucket under its nose to get its attention.



After making it halfway across the field, we started to lose our followers. They became distracted and one by one walked off in different directions. Taik and I ended up tracking down each one individually and half luring, half herding it into the new enclosure. At one point, Taik wrestled a particularly stubborn pig the final few feet across the fence line. Of course, the whole endeavor lasted much longer than anticipated and we finished up with flashlights, tracking the last pig down in the dark. However, I am happy to report that none escaped and they are all property fenced in, out on pasture.

BROODY HEN

One of our laying hens went broody, which means she was trying to hatch eggs. We moved her to a separate nest so that the other chickens wouldn't kick her out of her box, and gave the hen her own food and water so that she would not have to get up. I learned later that it is good to put many eggs beneath a hen when she goes broody, so that she can hatch more than her own. I didn't think of this in the beginning, though, so she only had three. It takes a chick twenty one days to develop, during which time the mother hen hardly leaves her nest at all. One day I accidentally shut her out of her room, and she practically fought me to get back to her eggs. She was very determined, and I admired her for her commitment.

Toward the end of the three weeks, we began to watch for signs of chicks. Then, one morning, we found two nearly developed babies that had somehow made it out of the shell but didn't survive. The third

egg, we discovered soon after, was not fertilized. I felt so badly for that chicken, which we nicknamed Broody, but she soon went back to the flock and resumed life as usual. She will probably go broody again soon, and this time I will place more eggs beneath her.



CROSSBEAK

Crossbeak was named for her crooked beak, an abnormality which makes her look as if she has a lopsided overbite. My friend paid us a visit and picked Crossbeak up off the ground, petting her and telling her what a gorgeous chicken she was. After that, Crossbeak followed us everywhere.

Later that day, we were herding the meat chickens to a new section of pasture. Taik, my friend, and I tried coming at them from different directions to shoo them across the fence line. We were getting most of them to move, but a few were slipping through the cracks. Suddenly I looked behind me and saw Crossbeak herding the stragglers. She stayed close to the ones in back and moved forward along with us, until the rest of the meat chickens were inside their new enclosure. Then, she sauntered off to be with her own flock.



THE DAILY GRIND

On the homefront, we have a small garden growing, and have been chopping lots of firewood to stock up for the winter. When we moved in, we installed a wood burning stove to save money, since the house only has fuel oil for heat. Last weekend I pickled some garlic scapes from the garden (a seasonal treat I recommend you keep an eye out for.) We have a washer but no dryer, so we've been drying our clothes on the line. It actually works quite well. We have ducks, turkeys, and a new kitten. Home sweet home.

Thanks and be well!