

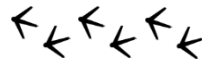
TWO TRACKS ACRES NEWSLETTER

April 2012



THE PIG CHUTE

Nothing could have prepared us for the monumental task of moving pigs. Relocating the pigs from the greenhouse to pasture outside was challenging, to say the least. By now, the animals weigh around 150 pounds and have strong stubborn streaks. At first, we naively thought it would be an easy move – just put some food in the trailer and they'd walk right in. Wrong! Pigs, we discovered, do not like moving from light to dark spaces, nor do they appreciate ramps. Our second attempt was to chase the porkers around the greenhouse and try to herd them inside. This attempt failed even more miserably than the last. Finally, we built a 'pig chute', or hallway, from their pen to the trailer, with walls close enough that they could not turn around. Inch by inch we got them closer to their destination. It took two of us just to push one the last few steps into the trailer. No doubt they now realize that they never should have protested, because they seem to really like their new digs.



The chicks have arrived. They are growing rapidly and have already begun what we think of as their awkward teenage years, in that time between chicks and chickens when they are no longer cute and aren't yet pretty. As chicks we keep them under a heat lamp in the barn until they will be able to go outside. It's been interesting to watch them establish a pecking order. Many of them lie contentedly underneath the lamps, but there are about ten that are battling it out for alpha chicken status. These hop around and flap their wings in the others' faces, sometimes jumping on one another in attempts to show dominance. They are ignored by the majority, who seem not to care.



The chickens belong to a breed called Freedom Rangers: a hybrid chicken that was developed in France, and is classified as 'Label Rouge', which is an indicator of quality meat in France. Freedom Rangers differ from the Cornish Cross breed that most people are familiar with in that they are slower growing and better foragers. Cornish Crosses, the breed preferred by most meat producers, often reach 4-5 pounds in only five weeks, and are used for their size and rapid growth. Raising them on pasture slows the growth process down, but we still wanted to try a different breed. The Freedom Rangers are brown and reach a pretty hefty weight of 5-7 pounds by the time they are fully grown. Plus, the name 'Freedom Ranger' is just hard to resist. Soon, the chickens will be put out to pasture. We plan to rotate them after the pigs so they will grab up all the grubs.



PIGS AS OUTLAWS

Feral pigs are dangerous and running wild in Michigan. These are escaped (or descendants of escaped) pigs from game ranches and farms. Wild pigs tend to be black, hairy, have flat tails and straight ears. Recently, the Michigan DNR decided to outlaw pigs that fit this description in order to control the population of feral pigs in the state. Unfortunately, many heritage breeds – indeed, our own Mulefoots – also fit this description. There has been much speculation among farmers that raise these rare breeds whether or not the law is going to affect us, or if it is only going to be enforced in the game ranches. We'll just have to wait and see.

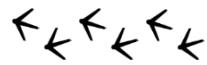
JOEL SALATIN. FARM GURU, COMING TO ANN ARBOR



To kick off the opening of the new Washtinaw Food Hub, we will be hosting a special meet and great event with Joel Salatin. Salatin is known for his innovative sustainable farming techniques at his Polyface organic farm in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. The Salatin event at the Food Hub will be running from 4-6pm on Tuesday, April 24th. Tickets for the Food Hub event are \$75 (\$65 for People's Food Co-op members) and include a dinner of local organic foods as well as an opportunity to share a dinner with members of the local community.

We encourage you to be a part of the dialogue on local, sustainable food and attend the Salatin event. Register online [at http://joelsalatin.eventbrite.com](http://joelsalatin.eventbrite.com).

Later that evening, Salatin will be delivering a talk called “Local Food to the Rescue” at the Michigan Theatre in Ann Arbor. Visit www.michtheater.org/shows/joel-salatin/ for more information.



MORE ABOUT PIGS

We are raising three mulefoot pigs. Thought to have descended from 16th century Spanish hogs, the mulefoot is a hearty black haired breed so named because of its distinctive non-cloven hoof. The trotter looks like the foot of a mule. Go figure.

The mulefoot population is at a critical low with fewer than 200 mulefoots in the year 2006. We hope to promote breeding diversity by raising heritage breeds. Distinctive breeds are known for different strengths. According to the The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy, the mulefoot is valued for ease of fattening and production of meat, lard, and especially hams.”



WEBSITE UP AND RUNNING

Two Tracks Acres is proud to announce the launch of its official website. Visit www.twotracksacres.com for information on our operation, our philosophy as well as musings from on the farm.

The site is in flux, so it will be changing its layout over the next few weeks until we settle on a final design. Be sure to stay up to date as we post event information and recipes throughout the season.

Until next time,

Be Well!