

Back Forty Acres

From the Desk of Kevin Doll

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Thank you for a terrific year!

All of us at Back Forty Acres would like to send you a heart felt "Thank You" to all of you that supported us throughout 2009. Without you we could not exist, so Thank You very much for 2009, and we look forward to 2010. We made great strides last year, all of our numbers were up and we hope to continue that trend into 2010 and beyond. We have heard from many of you and the reports were good, we're happy that you liked our



products. Thank you again.

Well let's get right to it. As you may have noticed we have a new format for the newsletter. We hope

you like it. It gives it that newspaper type of feel; but let's hope we don't go the way of most newspapers. So without further ado we'll move on to the newsletter.

Step into 2010

This year we already have plans to plant more pastures to rotate animals and more fencing to help keep those animals from becoming coyote food. We will try a few geese this year for Christmas time and will be increasing the number of all animals to meet the increased demand for a high quality, very flavorful, healthy and nutritious food. We are hoping the Silver Appleyard ducks that we kept from last year will

start laying and we can offer some ducks eggs for baking, which I understand makes for a terrific batter.



My son Nick has a very nice flock of Black Spanish Turkeys that he has raised over the last two years so we are looking forward to hatching some of those this year. Black Spanish

are a heritage breed, they are on the American Livestock Breed Conservancy watch list as a breed with limited numbers so we're not only supplying a great product but we're also helping to conserve some of nature's precious creatures. It's up to the farmers, the stewards of their land, to keep watch above and below the soil of their land.

We are making plans for another hoop house to enable us to better manage our laying flock, one that allows us to

*"Thank you for making 2009 a very good year for eating."
Sharon F.*

"I look forward to getting all our poultry from your family next year. It is wonderful. I will never eat a store-bought bird again!"

Becky P.

"Our turkey was AMAZING. Best I've served in 20 years of Thanksgivings!"

Liza B.

"My 13 month old went nuts eating the grilled pork and would have eaten all of it, until I stopped him and ate it myself."

Michael P.

select the hens that are producing the best and select those who will become stewers. It also

opens up possibilities for brooding and plant starting. "Value adding" are big words in the

sustainable agriculture world.

Pork Town U.S.A.

Well, 2009 was a tough year for our porcine department. We started the year with three sows and we ended the year with zero. One of our sows died shortly after farrowing, (which is pig talk for having babies), we managed to save 6 of the piglets and fostered them off to two different homes where they

could be cared for until they could return to the farm, many thanks to John and Emily. The other two sows just did not do well as breeding stock so we decided to replace them with some different ones. Our new girls should be up and running soon. We still have our boar, Humphrey, although his fate was up in the air also. We had another farm that was in

need of a boar so a deal was struck to sell him to a family in the "thumb" unfortunately that deal fell through so Humphrey is still on the farm. As of right now our first two batches of Tamworth market pigs are all sold. Some will go in February and some will go in April. We are planning on more for later this year but no dates have been set yet. We'll keep you posted.



The Fowl Line

We love chicken! Whether it's baked, grilled, fried or whatever we eat it all the time and that's why we stock our freezer with a pile of them. When you raise poultry on pasture as we do it's a wonderful thing! The only drawback is winter, no

pasture available means no chickens period. That's why we tell people to stock up when winters a comin'. You don't want to get caught in February with no cluckers in the freezer. Every year our broiler numbers go up and this year will be no exception, so if it's chicken you want, it's chicken you'll get, just

make sure to order enough for winter. Our broilers are raised on pasture in portable shelters that we move every day. This allows the birds access to fresh grass, sunshine, fresh air, and the occasional grasshopper or other tasty bugs. Our feed is made to our specifications with no antibiotics or growth

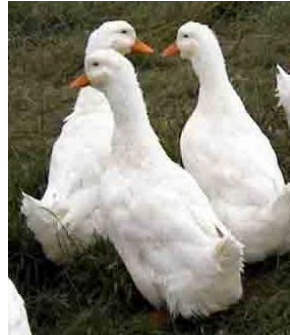
stimulants. We pull water right out of our well, the same water that we drink every day. We do our best to mimic nature with this practice so as to give you, the customer, the freshest and tastiest bird you'll ever eat.



People often ask "How do you cook a duck"? Well with so many recipes on the internet there has to be something that appeals to

your taste buds. Duck can be cooked the same way chicken can, be it grilled, baked or on a rotisserie. They are all dark meat, which some people shy away from, maybe all you need to do is fill your kitchen with the smell of a roasting duck and then tell me you only eat white meat. Our ducks are cared for the same way as the broilers with the exception of water; they go through so much water you'd think they were playing in it! Although I think they actually do drink a little of it from time to time. They are constantly splashing water on their feathers to keep them in tip top shape, always pruning and cleaning. We've come to expect the ducks to use a lot of water so we have them on automatic float valves to ensure they have a constant supply of fresh

water. The summer heat can really dehydrate a duck in a hurry!



This year we are going to try a few geese. We've had many requests for them so if you are interested get your order in early. We will have these ready for Christmas, but sorry we will not gift wrap! As with any of our projects, if this goes well then we'll keep them on the list in the future. They will be raised the same way we raise our ducks, although I bet they use even more water, might just as well dig a pond!

"I roasted another chicken this weekend and it was superb!"
Janine F.

"I have never been disappointed in the quality of your food and can enjoy our meals without visions of factory farms, pollution, and lines of semi trucks."
Susan W.

Turkey Trot

We currently raise four different breeds of turkey. We have what are called "Heritage Breeds"; these are turkey's that grow slow, can reproduce on their own, have more of the abilities of a wild bird like running and flying and they have more dark meat. The heritage birds that we raise are Bourbon Red, Blue Slate and Black Spanish. All of these birds are on the ALBC list of breeds in need

of protection from becoming lost forever. Again it's up to small farmers to insure that these breeds are kept going. Whether it's turkeys, ducks or rabbits if we don't step in who will? The commercial growers are not interested in slow growth, self breeding or sustainability of breeds. They are manufacturers of a product that needs to get to store shelves as cheaply and as quickly as possible, so don't look for any of the big guys to jump in. The other

breed that we raise is the standard white turkey, which is found in all supermarkets today. What makes ours different from the mass produced bird is how we raise them. As with all our poultry, our turkeys are raised the same way with fresh grass, sunshine, clean water, and a feed free of antibiotics and growth hormones. The big commercial growers have none of that; they have confinement, medicated feed and fecal contamination. We will

"The kids went back for seconds and thirds till it was gone. They were eating WHITE MEAT it was so good & juicy."
Andy M.

"Your eggs just taste better!"

Carol M.

"We are thoroughly enjoying the goat! We slow-cooked the shoulder for a dinner with friends and everyone was amazed how good it was."

Marina

"I feel really good about feeding our family high quality, farm fresh, locally grown food!"

Robyn W.

have two batches of turkeys in 2010. The first batch, all white turkeys, will be limited to about 15 birds, they will be ready for August, which is an excellent time for deep

frying a turkey, very crispy on the outside and tender and juicy on the inside. The rest, whites and heritage, will be ready the weekend before Thanksgiving. We expect

to sell around 150 birds this time, so if you want one don't wait till October to order or you may miss out. I know, I know who thinks of turkey in June?

Hooves and Horns



The one thing that stays the same year after year is the sheep and goats. As long as the grass is growing and the sun is shining they are happy. They tolerate winter like we do, they just get over it. On nice sunny days they will wander off to the pasture to see if anything is out there and after a while

they come back to the hay feeder with the look of, "when will this white stuff go away"? With the fall breeding done we hope to have lambs and kids on the ground in March or April, if everything goes right. We will have animals ready to go in the November / December time frame.

There is a limited amount of animals as our breeding flocks are not huge. Anyone wishing to put lamb or goat in the freezer should order as soon as possible. Lambs are bigger than goat kids, usually in the 60-80 pound range for hanging weight, and 30-50 pound hanging weight for kids. So if you were looking for half an animal, cut those weights in two for an approximate size. Note there will be some loss at processing time due to cutting the meat. Our lambs and kids are of excellent taste and texture from being raised solely on grass, as ruminants should be. Ruminants are animals with a four chambered stomach that is used for digestion of forages such as grass, which is the way nature intended.

Hoppers, Cackleberries and Crockpots

Rabbits are an excellent source of protein, all white meat, fine boned, and delicious. In Europe they eat rabbit much more than in the U.S. I think we are stuck on the Easter bunny

which is a shame because rabbit is low in cholesterol and high in protein which makes it a very healthy meat. We offer rabbit whenever it's available, which is several times a

year. No real firm dates so if you're interested let us know and we can let you know when some are ready. Rabbit can be prepared like many chicken dishes, just remember it's a

fine meat so cooking times should be adjusted as it will cook faster than chicken.



Our eggs literally fly off the shelves. During the winter when the hens slow down production it's a real juggling act to keep everybody happy. Right now the girls are snug in their hoop house, which is a greenhouse type building, clucking and scratching away in anticipation of spring which will mean foraging for grasses and worms or bugs, with the warm sunshine cascading on their backs, the breeze rustling their feathers, oh what a thought. Everyone loves spring and the girls are no exception. When spring comes it also means a boost in egg production with longer days and warm weather so we can expect

the egg supply to be good. Nothing gets you going in the morning like a great egg. We sell eggs all year round either from the farm or from a couple locations, one in Chelsea, the New Chelsea Market or in Ann Arbor at the Produce Station so if you can't get to us maybe you can get to them. Our eggs are farm fresh and delicious, the yolks are firm with beautiful color and the whites are clear so eat up!

Well, once the chicken has stopped producing eggs what are we supposed to do? How many people remember Grandma's chicken and dumplings? Guess what chicken she used for that? Not the young bird that has just started laying, not the rooster that had been driving you crazy for five years, she used the older hen that has stopped its egg production. Usually when the hen is about two years old it will slow down so much that it's eating more than it's laying and it's time to replace her. So what to do? At that time the hen will have been

allowed to mature at a slow rate and will have attained a wonderful flavor that makes dishes like chicken and dumplings or casseroles really come to life. These birds are called stewing hens because of the way you have to cook them. If you take a stewer and put in on the grill you'll be ordering pizza for dinner, it will be as tough as nails, but if you slow cook it you'll have a delicious dish that will have you wanting more. Every year we have a number of such birds, people wait all year to get their hands on these so when the time comes you have to act fast to get in on this. If you are interested let us know so we can tell you when to fire up the crock pot and makes some biscuits.



"I must tell you that our heritage turkey was spectacular! While carving, my husband snuck a piece into his mouth and loudly exclaimed "oh my!" Obviously there is a difference in flavor!"

Tracy N.

"All I can is WOW. We had some pork chops last night. They are wonderful!"

Jeannette L.

"Thank you so much for letting us be a part of this wonderful gift you offer the community."

Marion H.

From across the Back Forty

Each year for this newsletter I try to come up with something that pertains to sustainable agriculture. Whether it's how, what, or why to do it,

or maybe something new on the horizon. This year I think I've got one! When we go to farmers markets or people come to the farm or whatever we seem to be

getting the same question; "When are you going to become ORGANIC"?

Don't get me wrong, honest people who are organically certified have made a commitment to themselves and their

"We had a great time with the turkey. It was really tasty. I sent my family packing back east with yummy turkey sandwiches."

Gail M.

"I won't use any other eggs than yours to bake with."

Rebecca R.

"I made one of your birds for a roast chicken dinner and it was fabulous. Next I'm going to roast the bones and make soup. Mmmm."

Kim B.

customers to insure that they provide a highly valuable product. They have strict guidelines to follow on the how's and why's of their operation. They have spent many hours and many dollars to obtain this goal and should be commended, and for those who abide by the rules we should be happy for them. The reason we are not organically certified is my lack of faith for the certification itself. The government has stepped in and defined the word "Organic". The organic movement is growing by leaps and bounds so naturally the government wants in so they allow the word organic to be used wherever they want. Could you imagine the big boys using the word organic for their factory raised chicken like animals. Sounds silly but I wouldn't laugh too hard yet. The word organic can be likened to the word "free range". When you hear free range what do you think of? Is it birds enjoying fresh air, grass, and sunshine with room to move around as they please, sounds wonderful doesn't it? Here's the reality, free range means access to the outside whether they use it or not, keep in mind these large birds do not run around an awful lot so they may never even go outside, they may just sit and wait for their next feeding. Their access can simply be a dirt yard or a slab of cement, it doesn't even have to be a field with

grass or anything, now that doesn't sound to "free rangey" to me. But when it gets to the labeling, there it is "Free Range" chicken, yeah right! So when you see items in the store that say organic chicken, is it really? Did this chicken live on pasture with fresh air and sunshine in an enclosure with a proper stocking rate as to not overcrowd them and cause a sanitation issue, or was it locked in a building with 10,000 of its closest friends all vying for a good spot next to the feeder with fecal dust so thick workers need masks on when they come in to feed them or pull out dead comrades. Was this chicken fed a diet of locally raised grains with vitamins and probiotics for good health and vigor and allowed to graze in a pasture safe from predators with fresh air and sunshine? Or was it fed animal by-products with growth hormones and antibiotics to keep them alive till processing? Was this chicken enclosure moved everyday to a fresh spot in the field, or was it a stale barn with huge exhaust fans blowing 24 hours a day stinking up the neighborhood? Was this chicken driven by the farmer to a processor or processed on the farm in a clean and humanely manner, or was it trucked many miles overnight to a facility the size of Rhode Island where the "Organic" birds went through the same line as the industrial

birds to be radiated and chlorinated? Was this chicken delivered to the customer in a timely manner where it was sold fresh or recently frozen or was it trucked again many miles to a warehouse storage facility to be distributed many more miles away to somebody who sees the word "organic" and thinks this is the cat's meow? I don't know for sure so herein lies my problem, can I trust the people who raise them to be as they say they are or is it all smoke and mirrors? With stories popping up about organic farm suppliers getting caught using non-certified products and passing them off as certified really worries me. Maybe the farmer is honest but is the supplier out to make more money or are they in this together thinking no one will find out? There is a lot of money in the word organic. So to answer the question that was asked in the beginning of this tirade "is Back Forty Acres ever going to be organically certified"? Highly doubtful! Why do we need the approval of an industry that is looking at this from the wrong angle? To them organic only pertains to the feed used, organic corn and organic soybeans. Organic feed alone does not make a chicken organic. It needs fresh air, sunshine, quality forage, access to clean water, and above all humane treatment from start to

finish. It needs farmers who are dedicated to ensuring their customers can feed these birds to their children and feel safe doing so. It means keeping predators from terrorizing the flocks in the fields. All of these and probably more can be thought of but this is what makes a chicken organic, not a stamp on a plastic bag by some

government agency in Washington DC that doesn't know what they are certifying anymore than I would. Or some self appointed board of organic stampers who didn't realize how many ways they could be cheated. So in conclusion, I know it's about time, it all lies with trust. Trust the farmer to do what's right, whether

they claim to be organic or not. Look him straight in the eye and say "I'm feeding my family your product can I count on you"? Anything short of "sir yes sir" should be a red flag. So keep supporting local honest farmers and the bad ones will get sorted out and we'll all be better off for it. Thanks for reading.....Kevin

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Delbert is in the building

Earlier in the newsletter I mentioned that we had an agreement to sell Humphrey, our 650 lb Tamworth boar hog. Well like I said the deal fell



through and Humphrey is still here waiting patiently for his time to pounce into action. Now that's funny, for those of you who know Humphrey you're probably aware that "pouncing" is not in his vocabulary, for those of you who do not know Humphrey, he is the Garfield of hogs, he does not pounce, he sort of lumbers! Anyway because of the deal struck we were going to be in need of a new boar so I called a friend and lined up a deal to buy a young boar from him, then I realized the other deal went south and I did

not want to be like them and renege on the deal, so now we have two boars. So put your hands together and welcome all the way from Paw Paw, Michigan the one the only, let's hope so, Delbert! Delbert, like Humphrey is a registered Tamworth boar, he is only a few months old so he has some time to get acquainted with his new surroundings before he's called up to the "Bigs". If he is anything like Humphrey he should make an excellent boar and we look forward to the many piglets that he can sire.

Visit us at the Market!

Chelsea Farmers Market
May – Oct, Sat 8:00-12:00

Plymouth Farmers Market
May – Oct Sat 7:30-12:30



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**2010 Season
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