



Summer 2008

From the Desk of Kevin Doll

Hello to all.

I hope you are having a great summer so far. Mother Nature sure has been busy. Many storms have gone through our area recently, some more severe than others. We have lost power only during one of those storms. Fortunately the weather was warm so when the brooder lamps went out it wasn't a real big deal although I was up at 3 a.m. to keep an eye on things, oh the life of a farmer. As I write this our first cutting of hay for the winter feed supply is being brought in out of the field. The gardens are coming up nicely, along with the weeds! Our projects are moving along, although not as fast as we want them too but again life of a farmer. The S.L.O.W wagon is near its completion, it will be ready to set sail the end of June or first part of July and our hoop house just needs a day when the wind is not blowing the shingles off the roof so we can get the thing covered with the plastic!

Our first batch of Broilers went out. Thank you to all that purchased them I know you will love them. We BBQ'd several for my son Nick's graduation party, very yummy! The Turkeys are heading out to the pasture pens this week now that they are old enough to



get outside and enjoy the brilliant sunshine and fresh grass not to mention those very tasty bugs that make the mistake of getting too close. The Ducks are getting very close to being ready, can't wait to try one of those. Duck is excellent meat, all dark meat very tender and flavorful. My favorite way to cook Duck is to roast it with root vegetables with a honey glaze, oh behave!! My Grandma Doll always liked Duck, so that's the way I would make it for her.

Our pork is getting many wonderful comments. We had 10 hogs go out this spring and I for one am enjoying the heck out of it! The meat is just right, firm and lean. The cured meats cook up great and make the kitchen smell wonderful. We are very close to securing our own Tamworth Boar so we should have a good supply of pork in the months to come. Our three breeding girls are

growing very well and hopefully when the Boar arrives we can test him out on one of them. The other two would then be bred to farrow in the springtime.

As I mentioned above the Turkeys are going to the pasture pens probably today. We have the standard white Turkey, which is sold in every grocery store on the planet, although ours are raised way better than those commercial birds. We also have Blue Slate and Bourbon Reds both of which are heritage birds, which means they grow slower which helps them physiologically. Their bodies grow at a rate that allows them to mature more evenly if you will. They are also able to breed on their own, sounds silly but ALL white commercial turkeys are artificially inseminated! They simply are too big to do it themselves, that's just how they were developed. That does not mean the meat is inferior unless you raise them in a huge commercial environment where they are more prone to disease thus making the owners pump in the drugs. The heritage breeds also have more dark meat which for some is great! We are still taking orders for Turkeys. Don't wait till the last minute or you might miss out. We will have some for September; sounds like deep fryer time or try smoking them, as well as Thanksgiving time. Great birds!

This winter we bought some bred Kathadin sheep. Unfortunately out of the four only two produced lambs, two were not bred. I am currently in negotiations with the breeder who has agreed that I got the shaft and she will provide us with a couple of lambs. It's always a nice thing when people go the extra step to make sure everything is right. So we may be a little later with some lamb than we hoped but it's definitely worth it. Katahdin is a breed that has not been around very long, it was developed in Maine by a gentleman who wanted all the



characteristics of a meat producing animal without having to shear the wool off. So by crossing different breeds he was able to come up with the Katahdin, which by the way they are named for the mountain range in Maine where he lived. So if you happen to come out and see what looks like an animal with a bad hair day it's just them molting their winter coats.



The goats are doing great. We had about 20 kids born this spring, several triplets and twins. Wilson was able to get in the game so we are hopeful that his genetics will improve our existing lines. Those goats sure do enjoy the pasture; unfortunately we had to lock them out while we made hay, talk about an angry mob. I didn't mind the yelling and screaming

they did but where did they get the picket signs? Negotiations went well and a new contract was inked so now they are happily out in the pasture once again. People are starting to come around to goat meat, which is similar to lamb in taste and texture. The US imports millions of pounds every year so there must be something to it. Goat is generally smaller than lamb when it's processed so some will buy the whole animal, typically a whole goat will weigh 40 lbs or so hanging weight so that's not to much freezer space. We have an excellent curried goat recipe on the web page, www.backfortyacres.com, check it out you'll like it.

If anyone likes a great Sunday morning breakfast you can't beat fresh eggs. Since the early spring when the hens started to produce more eggs we have seen an increase in demand that we can't possibly keep up with so we called our hatchery and ordered started pullets.

Started pullets simply means that when we get the hen it will be about 17 weeks old instead of one day old, typically the hen will set its first egg at about 20 weeks, so we can speed up the process of getting eggs to our wonderful customers that are asking for more eggs. We expect those birds to arrive in early to mid July, we also placed an order for another batch for November, and so eggs should be readily available for everyone.

The rabbit market is hopping; oh you knew I'd say it! Customers are calling all the time for more rabbit. There for a while no one was interested but all of a sudden the orders started coming in. We are currently ramping up production, which is what rabbits do best, so very shortly we will be able to fill all the orders and get back on track. If you're looking for meat that is low in cholesterol, very lean all white meat then rabbit is what you want. Rabbit is also a great deal because the bones are very fine so they do not add much weight to the selling price so you are paying for mostly the meat and not much bone. Most of the fat that a rabbit produces is not in the actual meat like beef or lamb. Rabbit is very lean. When cooking it is easy to over do it, so just keep an eye on it and you'll be fine.



Back by Popular Demand... My Soapbox

What is going on with meat production? How come the government can't get a handle on something that people have been doing for sooo long? Why do we have to be worried about tainted meat? Recalls seem to be in the news every month, is no one watching what's going on at the processors or at the CAFO's (concentrated animal feeding operations) aka. Agribusiness? The answer is simple NO. No one is watching, no one cares unless there is money to be made. Why did that processor in California send those downed cows through the process then deny everything? Greed plain and simple, x amount of dollars per cow means x amount of dollars for the

burger they are made into. If you have inspectors right on site and this happens should we suspect kickbacks to look the other way? Now maybe the meat from those cows was ok but if the rules say no downed cattle and you have to use a forklift to get the thing on its feet what is the problem? I did a quick search and found three recent recalls for beef. Topps Meat Co. 21.7 million pounds of hamburger Oct. 2007. Westland/Hallmark 143 million pounds of meat destined for our school lunch programs, Feb.2008. JMS Meat Holdings Co. no amount was given but it went to 11 states including Michigan, May 2008.

Beef is not the only meat in question. Poultry recalls are also happening. Cagle's Inc. in Alabama 943,000 lbs, March 2008. Gourmet Boutique of New York, 286,320 for possible Listeria, May 2008. One recall from last year, Kraft Foods 2.8 million pounds of processed poultry. March 2007. I'm sure there are more and probably more to come.



Well what can we say cheap food demands cheap labor and cheap processes. Did we cause this? Maybe a little but it proves that no system is good enough unless the people running it are dedicated to their job. Small family operated farms like the ones that used to dot every county in every state that are being wiped out by big Agribusiness who would like nothing better than to have complete control of the food supply are making a valiant comeback. People like us who don't want chlorinated chicken or chemically enhanced beef and pork. People like us who want to know where our food is coming from, who want to meet the people who raise it and be reassured that they did everything they could to keep the animal healthy and happy through sound management from nature not Archer Daniel's Midland or Monsanto. People who you can look square in the

face and say did you do what you said you did and to be able to believe the answer you get! That's what food is supposed to be about, honesty and integrity not chemicals and hormones. Food is a thing of nature not the lab, please pass the cloned steak, oh give me a break!!! What are they thinking, oh yeah-right MONEY! Follow the money to the answer, almost forgot sorry. How many diseases is the result of the processed food system? Diabetes maybe, obesity probably, what about cancer, who knows? I just look at the past, were these diseases running rampant back then? Did all the people die from drinking raw milk, what a stupid way to say it! So then milk in the store should be called processed milk not whole or skim or whatever right? Let us go back to those times when the food didn't contain all the chemicals and preservatives they do now. Yes we'd have to learn some things over like eating seasonal, tomatoes don't grow in January in Michigan unless you have a greenhouse. You would buy halves and whole animals raised locally by farmers you know and trust for your freezer so you'd get through wintertime. Food would once again play an important part of our lives instead of being way in the back, I was going to say on the back burner but I'm trying to make a point here. Food today is less important than what shoes to buy or what TV shows to watch. I hope this makes sense to you because it makes sense to me. I know where my meat comes from, I know where to get fresh vegetables in season and I know what not to buy. Do your own research ask around you'll find many people who are ready to opt out of industrial food as much as they can. That's what it looks like from here.

Thank you for reading.....Kevin