

Community News
April, 2017

Water is one of the most important compounds needed for any living thing. Every organism, plant animal or human, needs water. Getting water to our cattle and chickens, the gardens and even our barn cats is a daily chore that has to be done. Let's take the easiest one first...the barn cats. Fill up their water dish; put it on the porch behind Antonia House, job done. If the water gets low, the cats will let us know by standing by the back door and letting loose with a loud MEOW. Translation: take care of ME, nOW. They let their needs be known.

Getting water to the chickens comes next. Whether they are in the coop or following the herd through some of the pastures, the fastest way to water them is filling several two gallon buckets with water and letting them drink. There is also a chicken water fountain that is used in both the coop and field. The fountain holds 20 gallons of water and operates on a floatation system. As the chickens drink the water, the float lowers and allows more fresh water to come into the fountain area. Both methods depend on someone filling the buckets or the fountain as the water levels drop.



The cattle are watered with a one hundred gallon watering tank. This method is a bit more sophisticated (but not much!). The watering tank is connected with a hose to an in ground hydrant in the pasture area where the cows are grazing. The watering tank is equipped with a floatation system. The water flows into the tank until the float stops the flow. As the cattle drink down the water level, the float turns the water back on and the tank refills automatically. This gives the cattle a constant supply of fresh water. As the cattle move through the pastures, the water tank is moved with them. Every time the cattle move, the tank is scrubbed out and then dragged to the next pasture area and connected to the hydrant in that area. In the winter, when the cattle are around the barn, a different insulated water tank is used. It works with the same type of floatation system as the field watering system but is insulated to keep the water from freezing.

Each of the garden plots has an in ground hydrant to allow for drip hoses to run through the gardens to bring needed water to the plants. Yes, we do depend on rain but as all of you gardeners know, at the height of summer, rain can be scarce. At that point the drip hoses are rolled out and water is provided for our growing plants.

The in ground watering system has been spoken about as you read through this article, so now a word about that. During 2012-14, the farm was connected with underground water pipes so that the major parts of the farm are all connected to a somewhat circular watering system. Twenty three functional water hydrants were installed throughout the pastures and gardens and seven underground connections were set in place without the above ground hydrants. The seven underground connections can be activated by simply installing the above ground parts. This allows for water to be available for the gardens, chickens and cattle throughout the farm. The cost of this project was in the neighborhood

of \$22,000, part of which was paid for by NCRS (National Resource Conservation Service) grants. We are extremely happy about the having water available to our animals and gardens, without the daily hauling of water out to the fields. We are also grateful to the NCRS and to the Bequest Fund for helping to pay for this project. This is one of several major infrastructure improvements on the farm.

Water is one of the most needed components of farming. Without it, plants and animals cannot live. We all know how important water is to all of us. It is truly a gift of life to all creation. Please join us in thanking God for this gift to all of us for we are truly blessed when so many do not have water.