

Community News
September, 2017

Over the past months you have been reading a lot about the individual parts of the farm; the acreage, cattle, chickens, gardens, soil, hay and water. Perhaps now is the time to try to pull all of those parts together and see how they work as a whole.

The four production parts of the farm are the cattle, chickens, gardens and hay production and the woods. Each of those parts contributes in some way to the total operation as a whole. The cattle is a year round operation. New calves are born at any time during the year and raised until they are at market weight. Cattle are processed as needed for sale through the farm store or sold as quarters, halves and whole animals to individuals. The herd numbers go up and down based on new births and numbers processed. That number can vary from day to day and certainly varies over the year. We try to have enough market weight animals so that we can take them to market when they are needed. Any excess cattle can be sold at auction when they are large enough to bring a good price. Income from the cattle comes in all year round.

The chickens are also a year round operation. Egg sales have a tendency to peak during the spring, summer and fall with some reduction during the winter. Since we do sell to a local restaurant, there is rarely a big back log of eggs. This is also a piece of the farm that brings in income year round.

The gardens are a seasonal piece of the farm operation. The gardens produce the fresh vegetables and fruits that the farm sells during the late spring, summer and early fall. Although the work of getting ready for the gardens begins in January in the green house, plants are not moved out into the gardens until early April, weather permitting. Unlike a grocery store's produce department, our gardens produce the vegetables and fruits according to the season in which they thrive. People stopping by the farm in spring are often surprised that we have no tomatoes yet. Tomatoes generally come in during August so they are not available until then. For some it is a lesson in where and how their food is produced. Garden income is seasonal and we count on the cattle and the chickens to help carry us through the winter season.

Hay is another seasonal crop. Hay can be a saleable crop but for us, it is used to feed the cattle during the winter when grazing is not possible. Every bale of hay that we can produce on the farm is one bale of hay that does not have to be purchased. Hay fields, whether baled, grazed or both, are essential to a healthy and well fed herd of cattle. Any income that hay brings to us is through the cattle.

Many people don't see the woods as a valuable resource for the farm. The trees are valuable in themselves because of their use of carbon dioxide and their production of oxygen through the process of photosynthesis. The woods also give shelter and food to the animal population that lives in it, while providing esthetic value to the humans who walk through it. All of this is reason enough to have our woods. But in addition to the intrinsic value of the woods itself; it can be a source of some income to

the farm when trees are harvested for human use. Income from this area is sporadic and a true gift from nature to us when it happens. This is truly a long term investment for the farm.

The farm might be likened to a four legged stool. Each leg on the stool is important in order to keep the balance of the stool. Cut off one leg and everything begins to wobble and fall. Each of the four areas of farm is important for the total well-being of the farm. We have worked for diversity in production in order to have some income for the farm all year round. Over the past few years this diversity has been established and of course we hope to grow each area in the future.

As we move toward the autumn of the year, our fall produce is starting to come in. We are storing hay and straw for the coming winter. I haven't checked but I suspect that our woodland animals are starting to store for the upcoming winter also. Continue to keep us in your prayers and you might remind our God that we could use a little rain.