

The magazine of modern homesteading

# COUNTRYSIDE

*& Small Stock Journal*

Volume 105 • Number 1  
JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021

**HOMESTEADING  
AFTER  
RETIREMENT  
(PART 1)**

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**AMERICAN  
GUINEA HOGS**

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**A SALUTE TO  
THE MIGHTY  
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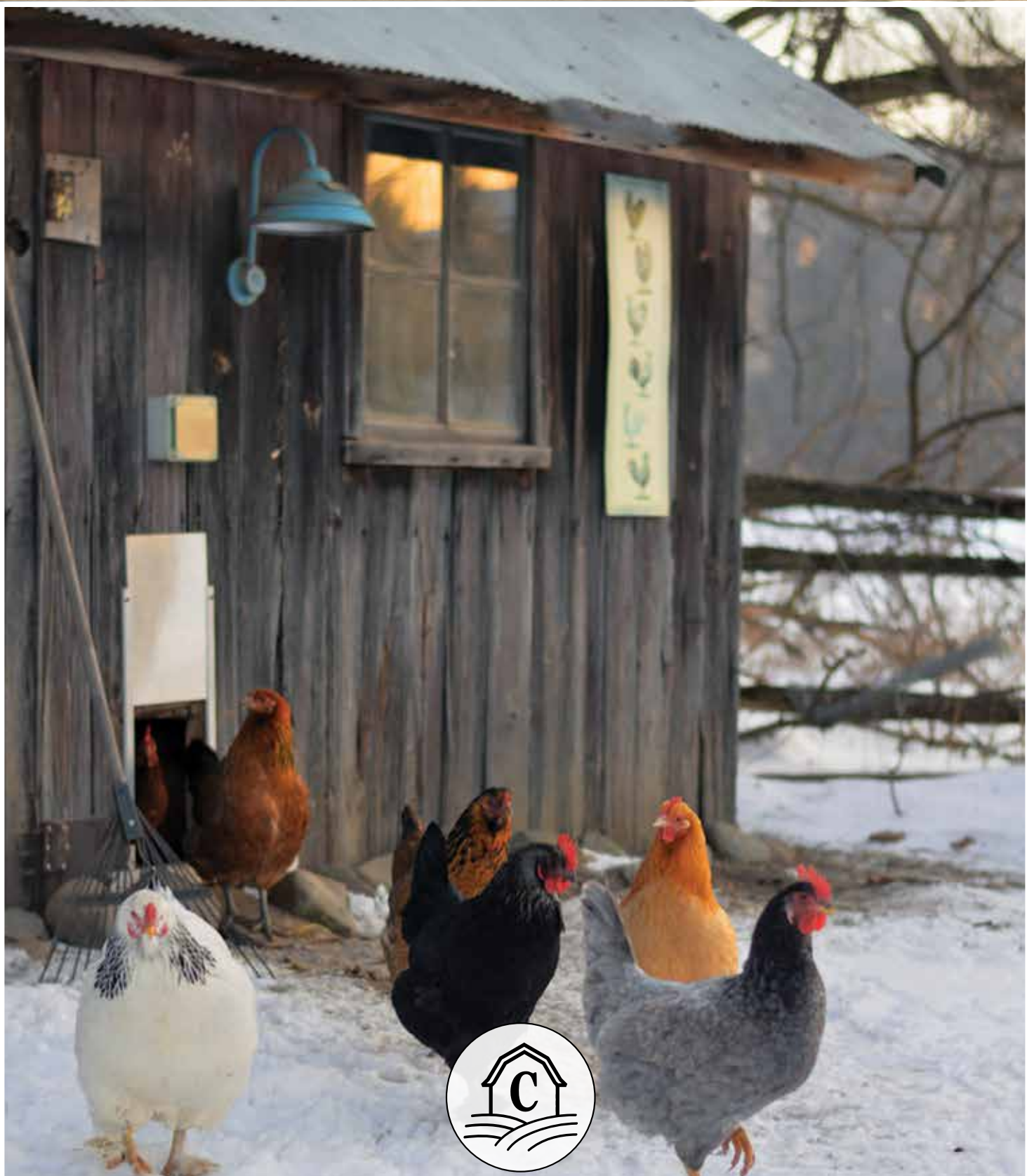
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# I AM COUNTRYSIDE

FEATURING MONTE FARM — KEN AND SONYA MONTE, MICHIGAN

## MONTE FARM

If anyone would've said that my husband and I would have a farm when we got married in 2008, I would have laughed in their face.

We were just two city kids. We could barely take care of ourselves, let alone anyone else. It's funny how people change though because now, I can't imagine not being a farmer. Five years ago, I brought home five little baby chicks. I was so scared to even hold them!

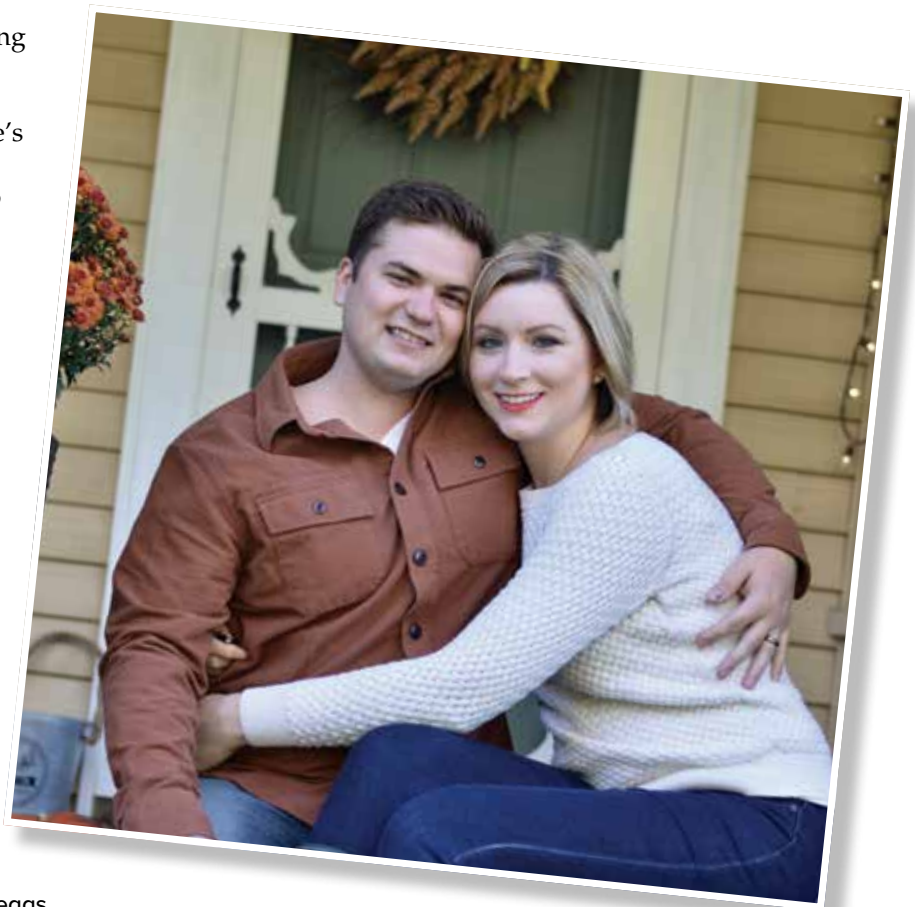
But, I really wanted to start growing my own food. As many chicken owners quickly realize, these little creatures have a way of opening one's mind to so many more possibilities.

It wasn't long before we moved to a 40-acre farm and I brought home my milk cow, Molly. I remember that day, sitting in the milking parlor, tucked under this cow I had just met. I had never touched a cow before, let alone milked one! It took a few months, but we became the best of friends. Her glorious milk opened the door to many new skills, and so our farm began to grow. Soon we would be feeding bottle calves with the extra milk and growing them into grass-fed beef.

We learned to raise and process meat birds

and turkeys. My husband built me a lovely greenhouse to start all my seeds in.

We had some bumps along the way, including having to downsize to just 1.5 acres, but our mentality is the same — don't be afraid or paralyzed to try new things, to get our hands dirty, and to make mistakes ... and we have made a lot of mistakes. But, that's real living, hands in the dirt, sweat on the brow, confused as heck, but satisfied at the end of the day. And that, my friends, is why I farm. 🌱



**Previous Page:**

Our chickens that lay beautiful rainbow eggs.

**This page:** We are Ken and Sonya of Monte Farm.

Follow Ken and Sonya Monte at  
**Instagram @montefarm**



Above: Basil and Rosemary,  
two big trouble-makers!

Top right: Bottle feeding my  
first calf.

Right: Our Jersey cow, Molly,  
a giving friend.



Molly's first heifer  
calf born on the  
farm, Maggie.



Our raised garden beds filled with composted cow manure.



Above: We fed our bottle calves fresh, raw milk from Molly.

Right: Bo Peep, my “dog chicken,” follows me everywhere.



# CONTENTS

January/February 2021

## IN EVERY ISSUE

- 4 I Am Countryside
- 11 Editor's Letter
- 12 Country Conversation
- 80 *Countryside Community*
- 86 Just for Fun
- 88 Almanack
- 92 Marketplace
- 94 Breeders Directory/Classifieds

## HOMESTEADING

- 16 **Homesteading After Retirement (Part 1)**  
By Janet Garman
- 18 **Estate Planning for Farmers**  
By Anita B. Stone
- 20 **A Salute to the Mighty Come-Along**  
By Mark M. Hall

## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

- 22 **Different Types of Fire Extinguishers and Their Uses**  
By Anita B. Stone
- 24 **A Complete Bug Out Bag List**  
By Marissa Ames

## BEEKEEPING

- 26 **Learn How Bees Can Be Sustainably Managed**  
By Kristi Cook
- 29 **Ask the Expert: When is it Too Late to do an OAV Treatment?**  
By Rusty Burlew

## GROWING

- 30 **Grow Your Own Spuds**  
By Kristi Cook
- 34 **When to Plant Vegetables**  
By Rebecca Sanderson

## POULTRY

- 38 **Selling Eggs as a Business on the Homestead**  
By Amy Fewell
- 42 **Developing Moonbeam Chickens**  
By Rebecca Sanderson
- 46 **Flock Files: How to Tell if Eggs are Bad**  
By Jeremy Chartier

## ANIMALS & LIVESTOCK

- 48 **American Guinea Hogs**  
By Janet Garman
- 52 **Best Beef Cattle Breeds**  
By Heather Smith Thomas
- 58 **Soay Sheep**  
By Tamsin Cooper
- 62 **How Big do Goats Get?**  
By Theresa Miller
- 67 **Goat Notes: Goat Labor Signs**  
By Gail Damerow

## FARM TO FORK

- 68 **Homemade Farmer's Raisin Bread**  
By Samuel Feldman
- 70 **Delightful Dumplings**  
By Rita Heikenfeld

## SOAPMAKING

- 74 **Hot and Cold Process Lard Soap Recipes**  
By Melanie Teegarden

## HOMESTEADING HACKS

- 78 **Hack Your Sleep**  
By Jennifer VanBenschoten



26



38



48



74

ON THE COVER | Photo by Ashley Lankosz @our.barnyard.life

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## EDITORIAL

**Ann Tom, Editor**

editor@countrySIDEMAG.COM

**Steph Merkle, Content Director**

smerkle@countrySIDEMAG.COM

**Samantha Ingersoll, Marissa Ames**

Editorial Assistants

**Traci Laurie**

Publication Designer

## ADVERTISING

**Alicia Soper, Advertising Director**

asoper@countrySIDEMAG.COM

(715) 829-7330

**Kelly Weiler**

kweiler@countrySIDEMAG.COM

(715) 965-1234

## COUNTRYSIDE'S MAIN HOMESTEAD

**CountrySide**

P.O. Box 566, Medford, WI 54451

[iamcountryside.com](http://iamcountryside.com)

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## Our Philosophy

At *CountrySide*, our purpose is to inspire self-reliant living on any level.

We acknowledge that the path to self-sufficiency is as unique as the person who accepts the journey.

We strive to strengthen the homesteading movement by sharing the diverse voices and knowledge of today's practioners.

We teach our readers how to grow and raise their own food; build, fix, and craft with their own two hands; and walk as gently on this planet as possible.

## Contact Us

**PHONE:** (970) 392-4419

**ADDRESS:** P.O. Box 566, Medford, WI 54451

**ADVERTISING OFFICE:** [advertising@countrySIDEMAG.COM](mailto:advertising@countrySIDEMAG.COM)

**EDITORIAL OFFICE:** [editor@countrySIDEMAG.COM](mailto:editor@countrySIDEMAG.COM)

**CUSTOMER SERVICE/BOOK ORDERS:**  
[customerservice@countrySIDEMAG.COM](mailto:customerservice@countrySIDEMAG.COM)

[iamcountryside.com](http://iamcountryside.com)



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 FROM THE  
 EDITOR
 

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**W**HILE I LOOK AT THE SNOWY, wintry scene outside, I love to see the variety of birds at my feeder and the suet cakes hanging from the frozen branches. The birds fluff all up as their way of staying warm as the cold winds blow. One of my favorite birds to see at my suet cakes is the pileated woodpecker. They are the largest woodpeckers in North America and I'm fortunate to have one dining daily outside my window.

Another bird that I had such pleasure and excitement seeing was about five years ago. Just as the sun was coming up, I looked across my yard to see something white sitting atop an old fence post. As the morning sun brought more light to the day, I got a better look to see that it was a snowy owl! I watched this beautiful bird for quite some time until I realized I had to get on the road and head to work. Not knowing if I would ever see it again, when I pulled into my driveway after my day at the office, it was still sitting right where it had been that morning! What a patient bird as it sat there all day long waiting for a bite to eat. Again I peered out the window watching until finally, it too had somewhere else it needed to be. What a beautiful bird the snowy owl is.

My all-time favorite birds to see are the majestic bald eagles. I love watching them as they soar against the blue sky with their white heads aglow. When seeing them close up, it's hard to believe their enormous size. Their wingspan can reach up to eight feet wide! I have a pair of bald eagles that live near me as I see them quite frequently but haven't

located their nest yet. I'm always on the lookout when I have my small dogs outside with me, as while it isn't too common, eagles have been known to swoop down and fly off with beloved little pets.

I have to tell a little story about crows. My mother had three that came to her house every day. She would throw scraps for them out the door and yell, "CHOP CHOP!" The three crows would be there within minutes to see what type of feast they were able to indulge in that day. Mom named them Sheryl (Crow), Russell (Crow), and Old (Crow). She loved her crows. Eventually a hunting season became legal for them in her area and shortly thereafter, her family of crows were no longer to be seen.

It will soon be time to tromp through the snow with a fresh batch of grub for my wild, feathered friends. If only they knew how happy they make me. In a world full of uncertainty, I hope that everyone takes time to enjoy what they love, even if it's as simple as watching the birds outside your window.

Happy New Year!



Ann Tom  
 Editor, *Countryside*

**HAVE AN IDEA OR STORY TO SHARE, A QUESTION TO ASK, PERHAPS AN ANSWER TO A QUESTION? WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

*Countryside* Editor Letter  
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# Country Conversation & Feedback

Contact us at: P.O. Box 566, Medford, WI 54451; [editor@countysidemag.com](mailto:editor@countysidemag.com)

## In response to “Our Finicky Wrens” (November/December 2020)

To Patrick W. Ager, several thoughts in regard to your problem:

First, it is better to buy birdseed from a place such as a farm supply store or a store catering to birds. Big box stores tend to carry mixtures of seeds, chaff, and seeds of low quality to birds all in the same bag. It is better both for birds and for your wallet to buy: black oil sunflower seeds, niger seed, and peanuts in separate bags. Second, you can put each food in a separate feeder. The wrens will love you and so will the other birds.

— Carol Ann Harlos



### OUR COUNTRYSIDE COVERS TELL YOUR STORIES!

From coops and farms to kitchen creations; do you have photos that you feel are cover-worthy? We would love to see them!

For your chance to be front and center on an upcoming issue please email vertical, high-resolution photos to:

[editor@countysidemag.com](mailto:editor@countysidemag.com)



In Response to “Question of the Month” (Sept/Oct 2020):  
What are your favorite soup or chili recipes?

### TACO SOUP

Makes about 8 servings.

1 lb. lean ground beef  
1 package taco seasoning mix  
1 package ranch dressing mix  
14.5 oz. can stewed tomatoes  
15 oz. can kidney beans  
15 oz. can pinto beans  
15.5 oz. can corn  
4 oz. canned green chiles  
3 cups water  
8 oz. tortilla chips  
8 oz. shredded Monterey jack cheese  
8 tbsp. sour cream  
1 onion, chopped

In large pot, brown ground beef and onion. Add seasoning mixes and stir. Next, stir in tomatoes, beans, corn, chiles, and water. Bring to a boil. Simmer for 15 minutes. Place 1 oz. (about ½ cup) tortilla chips in bowls. Ladle soup over chips and garnish with 1 oz. shredded cheese and 1 tbsp. sour cream.

**NOTE:** I use other shredded cheese types as well as canned tomatoes that have already chiles in them.

— Barb Nebendahl, Iowa

### MILD CHILI

While I enjoy chili, I am not a fan of spicy foods. After many trials and tweaking, I came up with a version of chili (that can be made with or without chili powder) that I consider very flavorful.

1 lb. lean ground beef or venison  
1 medium onion, finely chopped  
1 or 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
1 (8 oz.) can tomato sauce  
1 (6 oz.) can tomato paste  
1 (12 oz.) can V-8 juice or tomato juice  
1 cup red wine, or water  
1 bay leaf, crumbled  
1 tbsp. dried basil (or ¼ cup fresh, finely chopped)  
1½ tsp. salt  
¼ tsp. chili powder, more or less to taste (or omit altogether)  
1-2 cans chili beans, with liquid

In a large pot or Dutch oven, sauté beef, onion, and garlic in about 2 tbsp. of oil until meat is mostly cooked and onions start to soften. Add tomato sauce, tomato paste, V-8, wine, and seasonings. Simmer over low heat about 10 minutes. Add beans (with liquid), cover and simmer 1 hour or longer. If too thick, add beef bouillon or water to thin. Leftovers freeze well.

— Myra Oelrichs, Illinois

## In Response to November/December 2020 (Question of the Month): Family Legacy

My maternal grandmother was a family historian and she kept track of and traced the family line clear back into the 1600s. A lot of work, considering she did it in a time where there were no computers. A trip to grandma's house was like a trip back in time; she had what we called "the hall of fame," her pride and joy. The hallway was lined on both sides with family pictures from ceiling to floor and each member had his or her own poster board, so we knew who was who and how they were connected. Grandmother also put together a large poster where she had placed photos of ancestors clear back five generations on her side and grandpa's side as well. I had always been interested in the family history, so when my grandmother passed away at 91, I became the keeper of the family history.

The interesting thing, though, was that grandmother didn't really talk about the family or where they had come from. I knew there was Irish heritage, but nothing more. As I went through her belongings, I found loads of information tucked away in notebooks, photo albums, and envelopes. As I began the process of sorting through, I found a treasure trove. And as I looked, I found that all of the pictures had been marked with names and dates. These included pictures of my grandmother as a young girl, her summer in Yellowstone, and meeting the famous photographer for *LIFE* magazine, Alfred Eisenstaedt, who my soon-to-be grandpa was a chauffeur for. Her picture is featured in the 1946 edition! There were pictures of her wedding and of her children as they were born and growing. I even found pictures taken by my maternal grandmother's father, who I had never met, along with his brownie camera. The pictures he had taken showed the world from his day and time, taken 100 years prior to my seeing them. In these pictures I saw Twin Falls,



Idaho in the early stages of development, and even some familiar landmarks that I had seen as a child. I saw the great-grandfather I had heard about but had no idea of who he was. I saw him as a young man, in about the 1920s with his new Model T, his family, and his passions for hunting and fishing. I was becoming acquainted with my great-grandfather through his pictures. There were also so many other pictures of family long passed, people who were a part of me, of who I was, and how I was connected to this thing I call my family. Pictures capture moments of time, places, and people. As I look through the family pictures, I see my heritage and I feel a sense of belonging. I also see where I got my nose and my facial features. I had never before thought of my grandparents as anything but "my grandparents," but the pictures showed me a different perspective of who they were, their lives, and their world as they saw it and lived it.

— Laura Thomas, Montana

"We had so much fun doing the word scramble.  
Thank you so much for your incredible magazine.  
We made the oatmeal scotchies from the Nov/Dec issue  
and we loved them! Keep up the great work at *Countryside!*"

— Tory Perrotto

# The *Homestead* Documentary

Don't miss this grassroots documentary, a 10-part series on how homesteading families produce, provide, and profit from living off the land.



Meet these homesteaders on Instagram:

Carrie @thelittlepalletfarmhouse | Karen@pickofthelitterfarm  
Tiffany @fernwoodsfarm | Patrick & Chantel @helmickshomestead  
Laura @handgrowngreens | Noelle @conwayriverfarm | Jodi @accidentalcountryfolk  
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# Homesteading

## *After Retirement*

[PART ONE IN A SIX-PART SERIES]

BY JANET GARMAN

**I**S IT YOUR DREAM TO RETIRE from your career or day job and begin to live a homesteading life? The romantic idea of retiring business casual clothes for a daily wardrobe of muck boots and Carhartt® overalls can appear to be a dream come true. It can also turn into a living nightmare if you don't do your homework before the lifestyle switch.

What makes it work? Having a clear vision is one factor. Knowing what you want life on the farm to look like and researching beforehand how to get to that point. Gathering an educated and clear view of what homesteading and small-scale farming entails is the first step.

Before we get started down this road, I want to assure you that my goal is to encourage you to homestead. I want you to end up in a good situation. As my husband and I approach the traditional age of retirement, there are steps we have taken to make sure we can continue to lead this life we love. I may make some statements that might seem discouraging, however, they are only made to cause you to pause a moment, not make you stop.

Last year I spoke at the annual Homesteaders of America Conference in rural Virginia. My topic was "Raising Livestock on Small Farms." Little did I know,

while planning my presentation, that it would inspire a grassroots swelling of people nearing retirement. Many of the audience members had already retired to farm life or were planning the course of the next few years. They asked amazing questions.

They asked about stocking rates, time requirements, finding a farm caretaker, and how to work smarter not harder. In turn, they inspired me to reach out even more to folks looking to make the lifestyle change from suburban and urban life to a modern-day Green Acres.

Our family did not come from a farming background either, although we did have some homesteading genetics in the mix. We moved into farming as our children grew up, gradually building barns and enclosures and adding animals to the barnyard. We grew garden produce and learned to preserve food for the winter. We found we loved farming on a small scale.

I began blogging and writing to share our story and hopefully help others who were looking for a more agronomy-centered life. Eventually, social media entered the picture and I was able to reach even more people daily and offer answers to their questions. People without family support for farm living, but with a desire to live as their grandparents

did, are reaching out to a variety of educational and mentorship support options. It is up to those of us, living this life, to reach back and provide any assistance we can to answer their questions.

Statistics show that one third of the people over 55 years, who are currently farming, are new to farm life. While many folks retire to a daily schedule that permits unrestricted travel, return to academics, relaxation, part-time employment, or caring for grandchildren, some know that is not the right choice for them. A large percentage have been looking forward to rural settings, livestock, farmers markets, and purchasing farm equipment. Some are happy to be leaving behind a career that turned out to be less-than-fulfilling but paid the bills. Others are seeking more time outdoors after a career that required an office setting and dealing with the public.

Farming offers the opportunity to combine a meaningful life with a possible part-time income (although the hours are frequently longer than full time!). This income is often inconsistent and elusive, which is why many retiree farmers are financing their second careers with pension funds and retirement savings.

Land purchase is the biggest decision to be made. Buying a few acres to hundreds requires due diligence, especially if income from the farm is necessary to cover expenses. In some areas, land is sought after and therefore more costly. The closer you choose to be to health services, schools, and shopping, the higher the land value. Moving further out from urban life has different price tags. How far do you feel comfortable living from emergency health services and a hired labor force?

Raising livestock might be your dream. Caring for cattle, sheep,

goats, rabbits, and chickens takes time every day. Nothing ties you to the farm like raising animals. Dairy animals add even more time to the care with regular milking, cleaning, and processing the milk or making cheese. Regulations are strict on selling dairy products, which can lead to more hurdles that must be navigated.

Other pursuits could include market gardening, growing flowers for florists, or raising a breed of animal for sale. Perhaps you want to raise enough food for just your household. Are you ready to commit to the time requirement from early spring through fall? Do you know the basics of canning and food preservation?

Finally, what thoughts have you given to the future? Will you sell the homestead or pass it on to a family member? Solid estate planning is part of the long-term process. Building an amazing off-grid homestead will not do you much good in the future if the buyer pool is non-existent when you need to move closer to civilization.

I hope I have raised some points for you to consider. If I have piqued your interest in retiring to farming life, or homesteading for your own needs, join me in the coming editions of *Countryside* for more in-depth discussions of farming after retirement. 🌱

**JANET GARMAN** is a farmer, writer, instructor, and fiber artist living in central Maryland on the family's farm. She loves all subjects related to small farms and homesteading. She raises chickens, ducks, sheep, and fiber goats.

Instagram  
@timbercreekfarmandhomestead  
facebook.com/timbercreekfarm  
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Join us in the coming editions of *Countryside* for more in-depth discussions of farming after retirement.





# Estate Planning for Farmers

BY ANITA B. STONE

**T**HE U.S. DEPARTMENT of Agriculture National Startups Service reports that family-owned farms account for 97% of the 2.1 million farms in the United States.

Farming for most families is more than a means of livelihood; it is a desire to pass down the land and assets to heirs. But this plan faces many challenges to successfully survive a shift from one generation to the next, a transition that researchers find only 30% of farms survive with the second generation and 12% still operate with the third generation. The reason survival

rates are low is largely due to the lack of a plan and the results usually end in disaster. The farm ends up being sold and converted into non-agricultural use, cutting the legacy short and ending any hope of continuation within the family.

To successfully keep the farm in the hands of the family or transfer the farm, prior to retirement or death, farmers can use several methods of planning, the most common are estate planning or transition planning.

What is estate planning? This type of plan is defined as a plan written prior to the death of the owner and is implemented only after the death of the owner. The plan must be flexible and protected from attacks by creditors and predators, including tax and regulatory entities. Any estate plan needs to be carefully designed by a trained agricultural attorney, a person who knows the complexities of farming.

Three major mistakes often occur when handling agricultural estate planning needs. The first error is failing to form a plan. The question becomes, "Who should inherit the farm and the farm assets?" Trying to keep things fair and equal is a difficult decision when it involves farmland, livestock, and other assets. Because of indecision, and because sometimes it is too complicated, the plan is put aside and when the owner dies, there is no estate plan at all, leaving a court to decide how the assets are to be divided among the heirs.

Secondly, when joint ownership is involved, many complex issues arise which may result in giving up control of any real estate. Joint ownership may also be difficult to change since "undoing" joint ownership can be highly expensive along with complex tax implications. Holding real estate in the name of a partnership, corporation, or trust is a better option to minimize liability and retain control.



The third error is not planning for cash needs. Incapacity and death often require immediate liquidity to pay expenses, so you need to plan for long term needs. Farmland, equipment, personal residences, automobiles, and other personal effects are not immediately liquid. Without planning for long-term cash needs, families may be forced to quickly sell land and equipment for pennies on the dollar.

Another type of legal plan is known as a transition plan. This plan may be used if you want to transfer a farm operation to the next generation and requires three factors.

First, there must be a transfer of ownership, within the transition plan, of assets such as land, equipment, and ownership of the business itself. Second, there must be a transfer of control over assets. If ownership of assets is held by a corporation or limited liability company, they may wish to have a say in farm management decisions.

Third, there may be a desire to allow participation in the revenues of the farm business by whoever may or may not have an ownership stake, such as a partner or family member.

Transfer strategies are important. Transfer issues may cause conflict and should be addressed in any plan. To transfer a farm from one generation to another requires

legal assistance. To transfer the "business," the first step is to build a management team. "Team" is the key word. Many decisions and transactions need to be a team decision. Decisions made by the owner should focus on improving management skills of any heir.

Transition management offers farmers the option to use a wide range of "tools." Major tools include wills, trusts, life insurance, and "transfer-on-death" deeds.

A will is a well-known document and usually names a power of attorney or an executor to carry out the written requests. A will allows you to communicate instructions and strategies to your executors so that your wishes are realized. Wills only become effective upon death. You can revoke or change a will any time prior to death.

Life insurance is often overlooked but it can offer flexibility as a means of providing support to a surviving spouse with dependents. An appropriate amount of life Insurance can also pay estate expenses such as burial costs and taxes. Proceeds can also be used to purchase the interests of any children and the proceeds are not required to go through probate.

A transfer-on-death deed (TODD) is popular because the owner designates one or more persons as beneficiaries. The beneficiary automatically becomes

the owner of the property when the current owner dies. This deed has the flexibility of a will.

If a trust is chosen, this tool can be flexible, especially a revocable living trust and needs not pass through probate. Trusts also provide public disclosure, but can become frozen and involve up-front costs.

Several other tools should be considered. A farm attorney can inform the farmer of other available entities and changes in the legal system. For example, corporations have been with us for centuries and limited liability companies have been with us for decades. Newer forms, including limited liability partnerships have emerged, proving to be a flexible tool for farmers, looking to give some heirs greater control over operating decisions while still affording other heirs the opportunity to participate in the revenues.

Summarily, given several choices listed and other opportunities for farmers to control their land and assets, farmers can select from a multitude of options. The key is to take the time to check all possibilities, both pro and con, although daunting and numerous, and decide on a plan that will protect the land, the assets and the heirs; hopefully, keeping the farm running for generations in the hands of the family and making sure every aspect of the farm business is protected. 🌱

**ANITA B. STONE** is an author and Master Gardener in North Carolina, teaching others how to farm sensibly, making life easier and fulfilling, and admits she will always stay young-at-heart, just like her grandchildren.

# A SALUTE TO THE Mighty Come-Along



BY MARK M. HALL

**I**N COUNTLESS BARNs AND SHEDS across this nation is one of the greatest tools known to man. Its capabilities are such that no homesteader wants to be without it. Thanks to the fabulous come-along, an endless variety of monumental pulling tasks can be performed by one individual. Without a doubt, it is my favorite of all tools, in case you hadn't guessed already.

This power puller, as it is also aptly called, is a tough, hand-operated winch. With each pull of the lever, the ratcheted gear pulley tugs an inch or two of wire rope and wraps it onto a steel drum. As a result, whatever this super pulling tool is hooked to "comes along" with it. Like mine, most models can lift up to 2,000 lbs. and drag as much as 4,000 lbs.! That means it can lift a load of 333 bricks and drag twice as many.

My first encounter with the amazing come-along took place in the late 1980s when I was a teenager. That summer, someone had offered to buy Dad's 1950 Chevy. Rusty and dilapidated, the car had sat unused for many years. Removing the broken-down classic from its resting place behind the garage would be difficult.

It was perpendicular to the narrow driveway, so there was not enough room to tow it. However, there was plenty of room for Dad's come-along.

In a jiffy, he hooked one end of the come-along to the car frame and the other end to a chain wrapped around a nearby tree. I must admit, as I watched him

quickly tighten the slack in the wire rope, I was skeptical of its ability to do the job. Could only one man and a hand tool really drag this 1.5-ton car? After all, the wheels had sunk into the ground, and it would have to be pulled slightly uphill. Yet, sure enough, as Dad pulled hard on the lever, the antique Chevy began inching its way up and out of the age-old grooves in the dirt. It was incredible! Before long, I was happily finishing the job for him in my muscle shirt and stonewashed jeans.

Over the many years since that time, I have haplessly worked myself into numerous jams on our own little farm. Yet, with the help of my come-along, these tough situations have been turned into mere child's play. When I began to build my first fence, it looked horrible. Rolled wire fencing sagged and wavered pathetically from the first few metal

Thanks to the fabulous come-along, an endless variety of monumental pulling tasks can be performed by one individual.



The come-along is a versatile tool that can help out in numerous homesteading situations.

posts. That afternoon, a farmer friend stopped by and reminded me that the wire needed to be stretched. I could have gone right then to the local farm store to buy a fence stretcher, but he pointed out that my come-along could do the job just as well for a light-weight fence such as mine. Fortunately, he offered to stay and help, and I gladly accepted. For starters, we temporarily nailed two scrap boards together, over top of the rolled fence wire edge, to make a firm pulling surface. We then hooked one end of the come-along to the boards and the other end to a fence post ahead in line. To my delight, a few tugs on the handle straightened the wire substantially. The process was repeated with each additional roll until the fence was stretched and completed.

Once, I unwittingly put our old John Deere lawn tractor in need of some pulling assistance as well. Normally, I use a weed whacker to remove the weeds that grow tall on the creek bank, but one year I decided to be smart. Rather than walking all around, whacking the entire bank, I could instead save time by cutting some of it with the lawn tractor. Soon, I was greedily mowing down tons of

weeds, oblivious to the uneven contour of the slope beneath me. Before long, my drive wheel slipped into a hole, and when the tractor couldn't move any further, I knew it was time to bring out the come-along. Fortunately, there was a tree on the right, at the top of the slope, against which I was able to secure the puller. In just a matter of minutes, the tractor was hooked up and pulled back into the yard, where it clearly belonged.

On a separate occasion, I buried the lawn tractor deep into a mud hole and called to duty the come-along once more. However, this time around, there was nothing to anchor against — no tree or fence post anywhere nearby. Splattered already, I slithered off of the mud-caked tractor and slogged my way over to a metal spike lying nearby. I snatched it up, positioning it about 30 feet in front, and pounded it into the ground as far as I could. Again, the come-along pulled out the lawn tractor with no problem.

As you can see, the come-along is a tool of a thousand uses. Some builders use it in framing, while others correct the positioning of old, leaning walls. It is even utilized in certain automotive

body repair procedures, such as the repositioning of bent frames. There are those who claim that they can even pop out dents in body panels with it.

Yes, the come-along is indeed a most valuable tool and therefore has enjoyed an exceptionally long and productive life. In fact, an entire century has passed since the very similar prototype of the modern come-along was first invented. Millions have been sold all over the globe since the 1940s when it was first commercialized, and there is every reason, in my view, to expect that millions more will be sold over the next hundred years. Mankind just can't seem to avoid becoming thoroughly stuck, now and then. That goes double for me, and I assure you, I'm not pulling your leg. 🍀

**MARK M. HALL** lives with his wife, their three daughters, and numerous pets on a four-acre slice of paradise in rural Ohio. Mark is a veteran small-scale chicken farmer and an avid observer of nature. As a freelance writer, he endeavors to share his life experiences in a manner that is both informative and entertaining.



# Different Types of Fire Extinguishers and Their Uses

BY ANITA B. STONE

**N**OT ONLY IS IT SMART TO KEEP FIRE extinguishers in your home, but it's also the law in many states. Many of us do not realize that a single fire extinguisher does not work on every type of fire. So, to protect yourself fully, you need to decide which rooms in your home need an extinguisher and to ensure that you have the appropriate extinguisher for any potential fire.

Here is a brief explanation of the basic elements of fire. Briefly defined, there are five classes of fire:

**Class A** is freely burning, combustible solid materials such as wood or paper.

**Class B** is the flammable liquid or gas.

**Class C** is the energized electrical fire. (Energized electrical source serves as the ignitor of a Class A or B fire. If an electrical source is removed, it is no longer a Class C fire)

**Class D** is a metallic fire, such as titanium, zirconium, magnesium, sodium, and aluminum.

**Class K** is a cooking fire, where animal or vegetable oils or fats ignite to create a fire.

Regardless of the type of fire, there will always be these same four elements present: fuel, heat, oxygen, and chain reaction.

The theory behind putting out a fire is that it can be extinguished by removing any one or more of the four elements. For each class of fire, the fuel, heat source, and chain reaction vary, which is why you need different types of fire extinguishers. For example, a Class A fire can be safely extinguished with water, but a Class C fire cannot, as water would conduct the electricity and risk harm.

There are six main types of fire extinguishers including recent innovations:

**ABC powder fire extinguisher** has many advantages as it is a multi-purpose extinguisher and is one of the most common extinguishers to have on the homestead.

A powder extinguisher sprays a fine chemical powder composed of monoammonium phosphate which acts to blanket the fire and suffocates it. Powder extinguishers are effective for Class A, B, and C fires since it is not an electrical conductor and it can break the chain reaction in a liquid or gas fire, something a water extinguisher cannot do.

**Carbon dioxide fire extinguisher** is one of the cleanest types of extinguishers to us because it leaves no residue and requires no cleanup. The CO<sub>2</sub> extinguisher emits CO<sub>2</sub>, displacing the oxygen to suffocate the fire. It also cools the fuel as well, since the CO<sub>2</sub> is very cold. It is perfect for use on Class B fires that involve flammable liquids and on electrical fires.

**Wet chemical fire extinguisher** is a specialized type of extinguisher focused on Class K fires, those involving cooking material such as animal and vegetable fats or oils. This extinguisher contains a solution made up of potassium that attacks the fires on two accounts. First, the liquid mist spray acts to cool the fire.

Second, a thick soap-like substance forms, sealing the surface of the liquid to prevent re-ignition. It can also be used for Class A fires where materials such as wood or paper had caught fire.

**A water mist fire extinguisher** is the most versatile of all fire extinguishers. It uses a new technology that works across most fires. This type of extinguisher releases microscopic water molecules that fight fires on many levels. First, because so much water is dispersed in such a microscopic fog-like

form, the level of oxygen in the air is decreased, which helps to suffocate the fire.

Second, the water particles are drawn to the fire and therefore act to cool it, reducing the temperature. So, it can actually be used on electrical fires because the water will not act as a conductor, as well as on burning liquids and gases where a standard water extinguisher could not be effective. A water mist extinguisher is safe and effective for use on Classes A, B, C, and K fires.

**Foam fire extinguishers**

are suitable for Class A and flammable liquids of Class B fires. They spray a type of foam that expands when it hits the air and blankets the fire. This protection prevents the vapors from rising off the liquid to feed the fire, starving it of fuel. Because the foam is mixed with water, it has a cooling effect as well. This type of extinguisher is best for liquid fires, such as gasoline fires, but can also be used on Class A fires that involve combustibles like wood.

**Clean agent fire extinguisher** is a selective type. It's stored in liquid form and when it's sprayed and hits the air, it converts to its gas form, which is non-conductive. It is safe for use while humans are present, leaves no residue, and has a very short atmospheric lifetime, making it eco-friendly. The gas, often composed of halon, extinguishes fire by reducing the oxygen levels and impeding the chain reaction.

In choosing a fire extinguisher, make sure that you can easily lift what you select. Larger extinguishers may pack more power, but you must be able to use them properly. An extinguisher

## KNOW YOUR FIRE EXTINGUISHER

CHOOSING THE RIGHT EXTINGUISHER CAN PREVENT PROPERTY DAMAGE AND SAVE LIVES

Extinguisher Type → Type of Fire ↓	 Water	 Foam	 CO <sub>2</sub>	 Dry Chemical
<b>A</b> Paper, Wood & Plastic	✓	✓	✗	✓
<b>B</b> Flammable & Combustible Liquids	✗	✓	✓	✓
<b>C</b> Electrical Equipment	✗	✗	✓	✓

that you can't easily and knowledgeably use is useless.

Learning how to use your fire extinguisher is imperative. Familiarize yourself with the directions so you will be prepared in case you need to put out a fire. Typically, fire extinguishers are fairly easy to use in the case of a fire. Most types operate using the "P.A.S.S." technique.

- P.** Pull the pin on the fire extinguisher in order to break the tamper seal.
- A.** Aim the fire extinguisher low with the nozzle pointed at the base of the fire.
- S.** Squeeze the handle of the fire extinguisher to release the extinguishing agent.
- S.** Sweep the nozzle from side to side while pointed at the base of the fire until it is extinguished.

It is recommended to keep at least one fire extinguisher on each level of your home. Make certain to keep the extinguishers handy where fires are more likely to start, such as in the kitchen and garage. If you own outbuildings, barns, and other structures, make certain you protect the property with the proper fire extinguisher. And make certain you place the extinguisher at the proper level for each location so everyone will know where it can be found when necessary.

Read the safety directions on each extinguisher, because there may be additional safety procedures on each one, depending on the type you use.

In summation, know your extinguishers, place them in proper locations, and know the types of fire in order to protect yourself. 🌱



# A Complete Bug Out Bag List

BY MARISSA AMES

**S**OME CALL IT A 72-HOUR KIT, others call it a get home bag. List what you need for three days, pack it in a portable container, and stash it in a safe place. If stuff hits the fan, grab it and go.

Make your bug out bag list and assemble it before anything can hit the fan. It doesn't take an impending apocalypse to make you glad you prepared. Bug out bag lists may cover different scenarios but they have a single focus: to cover one person's needs for three days.

## NON-PERISHABLE FOOD

Focus on non-perishable food such as canned goods, protein bars, MREs, and freeze-dried food. Consider weight. Three days' worth of canned food can get heavy. Also consider water requirements for cereals or freeze-dried food. Find a good balance of both. Also remember to pack what you will eat because you'll want to replenish your packs, consuming foods before they expire and purchasing new products.

## WATER

Another obvious addition is the water you must drink. But many people don't add water to their bug out bag list. Perhaps because it's so commonplace we don't think about it? Perhaps because it's such a pain to carry. But the Department of Homeland Security recommends keeping a gallon of water per person per day. You'll need it for consumption plus hygiene needs.

In addition to bottled water, have a way to get more. New water filtration systems are small and fit within backpacks or inside plastic bottles. Sawyer water filters are \$20, will filter a million gallons, and filter to 0.1 microns because they have a syringe that back-flushes to filter again.

## CLOTHING

Don't just include clothes. Pack warm clothes that fit you and repack if you change sizes. Fold clothing tightly and store in a zippered plastic bag to keep them dry. To save even more space, vacuum seal them with a Food Saver or similar appliance to remove all the air and make a tight, flat packet. Remember extra socks and underwear. Add shade protection such as a collapsible, wide-brim hat.

## MEDICATIONS

If you can, ask your doctor about purchasing more than a monthly supply so you can keep several days' worth in your pack. Remember prescriptions, over-the-counter pain or fever-reducing medication, and treatments for upset stomachs. Pack them in a waterproof container.

## FIRST AID KIT

First aid kits should be at the top of your bug out bag list. If you don't have time to assemble one yourself, purchase a previously made first aid kit that covers most emergencies. Include a bandana or a long strip of muslin to use as a bandage or to make a splint. Antibiotic ointment or petroleum jelly can keep away infection and relieve windburn. Don't forget hand warmers to avoid cold injuries.

## LIGHTING

If you pack a flashlight, store the batteries in a separate waterproof container such as factory packaging, so the batteries don't corrode. Glow sticks are small and lightweight. Mirrors signal for help. Candles can also produce heat for cooking and to battle hypothermia. A potent lighting source, emergency flares

can warn other people away from danger, alert emergency personnel, and light a fire if your matches are wet.

## TOOLS

Scissors and knives perform functions as simple as opening a bag of food or can cut plastic and paracord to construct a shelter. And don't forget the plastic and paracord themselves; a lot can fold up in a small space. Include a whistle to signal for help and foil emergency blankets to keep you warm until help arrives. Pair matches, lighters, or magnesium fire starters with combustible material to burn. Don't forget a non-electric can opener for those cans of food.

If you're worried about space, pack items with multiple uses. Or consider items that fold up into small spaces. A very basic survival gear list can include a black plastic garbage bag, a folding knife, paracord, waterproof matches, an emergency blanket, and cotton balls dipped in petroleum jelly. This can all pack into a space of four inches by four inches.

## SANITATION ITEMS

No matter where you end up in an emergency, sanitation is an important and rarely considered factor. Until it happens. Bad sanitation can make you sick... or, at least, very uncomfortable.

Include moist towelettes, hand sanitizer, toilet paper, garbage bags and plastic ties for waste disposal. A washcloth can be used again and again. Remember feminine products and diapers, if you have women or small children in your family.

## WAYS TO COMMUNICATE

Older bug out bag lists recommend hand-crank radios or small FM radios with extra



batteries. Modern times may dictate extra battery packs or solar chargers. And don't just pack the necessary technology. Make a list of the names and addresses of your family members and friends, in case you seek help ... or they do.

## ENTERTAINMENT

Pack a deck of cards or a good book. Perhaps a couple small travel games for the kids.

## MONEY

Few emergency situations will be the result of economic collapse. The more possible scenarios are a quick retreat to a hotel. Or a stolen wallet on a family vacation, including all your credit cards. Try to anticipate your needs for three days: food, lodging, gasoline, automobile repairs, train tickets, and supplies you may not have packed. Prepaid credit cards or phone cards may help, but cash is accepted in most places you'll go.

## IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

Birth certificates, social security cards, bank account information,

medical information, and address books fit in portable containers. Fireproof, locking boxes add more security. Keep those valuable documents in the same area so you can grab it and go, with the key on your key ring, if a fire breaks out or your house floods.

## A BAG FOR EACH FAMILY MEMBER

One bag cares for one person. Remember diapers and extra clothing for small children, medications and other special needs for older or disabled parents. Do you have an Epipen® for the daughter with the bee allergy? A written list of medications or special needs for a non-verbal sibling, in case you get separated or

can't act as an advocate? Place all these bags in the same location so you don't have to hunt for them if an emergency occurs.

## REMEMBER YOUR PETS

If you have to evacuate, where will your dog go? Pack a bag for him, too, including food, water, collapsible dishes, and ways to dispose of his waste.

## CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITIES

Whether the situation may be winter weather, earthquake, car trouble, locations with no sewage facilities, or other unforeseen events, try to build your bug out bag list to accommodate as many as possible. 🌱

Editor of *Goat Journal* and *Backyard Poultry* magazines, **Marissa Ames** runs a small homestead in Fallon, Nevada, where she focuses on saving and propagating rare breeds of goats and garden vegetables.  
facebook.com/amesfamilyfarm  
instagram.com/amesfamfarm



## MASTER SPLITS AND RAISING QUEENS

The most sustainable manner of keeping bees requires beekeepers to learn skills beyond hive inspection, feeding regimens, and pest control. Learning to create splits and raise queens is, without a doubt, the most sustainable way of reducing costs.

Don't be intimidated by splits. Do some reading, talk to the experienced beekeepers, and take that leap of faith that so much in beekeeping requires. Bees are resilient with proper care and often manage various sizes of splits with ease — often requeening themselves with little to no help from the beekeeper.

Queen rearing, on the other hand, is possibly the most intimidating skill. However, this skill saves the cost of a new queen and exorbitant shipping costs to get her. The trick is to find a method that gives you peace of mind with its associated risks. For instance, if the risk of grafting makes you lose sleep at night, no fear. There are other less risky manners to raise a few queens for a small apiary. Walkaway splits, particularly in spring when the bees are eager to mate, are the simplest and most cost-effective manner of killing two birds with one stone — you get a new colony AND a new queen all in one fell swoop.

Even better, take advantage of swarm cells ready to be inserted into new splits. A box knife and a cell protector are all you need to cut each cell out and insert them into a newly queenless split. This is how I raised queens for a few seasons before I gathered the courage to graft. This also allowed me to strengthen the genetics in my bee yards as I was able to pick and choose which swarm cells I wanted.

The worst-case scenario with any of these queen-rearing methods is that you may have

# Learn How Bees Can Be Sustainably Managed

BY KRISTI COOK

**I**F YOU'VE BEEN INTO BEES long, you know the high cost of beekeeping. Sadly, this drain on the pocketbook is one of the primary reasons many beekeepers call it quits after a couple of years of expensive replacement colonies, high-priced queens, and exorbitant shipping costs. However, bees can be sustainably managed on a year-to-year basis with minimal out-of-pocket expense and less impact on the environment.

to try again if a queen doesn't return from a mating flight or if the queen doesn't emerge from the cell. But it's easy to try again, still with nothing really to lose.

### SELL YOUR NUCS

Here's a hidden gem in the beekeeping world — you don't really have to learn how to make splits nor how to raise queens. There are other ways to acquire new colonies and fresh queens. But first, let's talk about the no splitting issue.

I can't tell you how many Beeks I've heard say they don't want to make splits because they don't want to increase their numbers. Okay, totally makes sense. Until you understand that the single most driving force behind any bee colony is the teenage-like urge to do the thing that makes more "babies"—swarming! There is no way around it, bees WANT to swarm. It's really quite annoying at times. But, that's a good thing for you even if you don't want more colonies.

A happy, healthy hive that could end up swarming is the perfect source of "bee rent." Go ahead and make that split, knowing you don't want to increase your numbers. Then go to your local bee club and tell one or two Beeks that you need to sell a nuc, and BOOM! Your bees just paid their rent for the year and your apiary numbers stay where you want them. Nucs sell like crazy as seemingly every bee community is in very short supply of local nucs.

On the flip side, if you're the beekeeper searching for a package or a nuc, put out feelers at your local club, make posts on social media, Craigslist, you name it, and you're likely to find the aforementioned beekeeper trying to sell his surplus bees. By keeping your purchase local, you save on shipping, you get much less stressed bees because they haven't

had to travel hundreds of miles to your yard, and as an added bonus, you'll likely have a colony better suited to your environment if they came from a local apiary that works toward building a more locally adapted bee.

The same holds true for queens. It is true that queen rearing is much less common than the sale of surplus nucs, but local queen

producers are out there. It just takes effort to find them at times. Sometimes that local queen may be 50 miles away, but it's more sustainable to spend an extra \$15 in gas for a locally raised queen than it is to spend \$40 in shipping for a highly stressed queen from across the country.

Finally, there's the totally free swarm up for grabs. The

**SHIP DIRECT TO YOUR DOORSTEP!**  
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It's more sustainable to spend an extra \$15 in gas for a locally raised queen than it is to spend \$40 in shipping for a highly stressed queen from across the country.

advantage of buying bees vs. catching swarms is in the comb and the age of the queen. Nucs come with a minimum of four frames of comb and a fresh queen while a swarm has no comb and the queen is often an older queen. However, I've caught many swarms with virgin queens that go on to mate and come back ready to go. Some of these have even become my breeder queens, so you stand a good chance of really good genetics with swarms.

#### **VOLUNTEER**

Maybe you prefer to keep costs closer to zero. It costs nothing to volunteer to assist another beekeeper in his or her yard in exchange for a few queens or even a nuc or two. Most beekeepers keep bees as a hobby and don't want their numbers to grow. Hit one up and ask if they'd be willing to let you help with inspections, honey harvesting, mite treatments, or even in readying equipment. You'd be surprised how many beekeepers appreciate occasional help, and you'll gain extra knowledge along the way in addition to a few new bees. 🍯

**KRISTI COOK** lives in Arkansas where every year brings something new to her family's journey for a more sustainable lifestyle. She keeps a flock of laying hens, dairy goats, a rapidly growing apiary, a large garden, and more. When she's not busy with the critters and veggies, you can find her sharing sustainable living skills through her workshops, articles, and blog at [tenderheartshomestead.com](http://tenderheartshomestead.com).



## BACKYARD BEEKEEPING

### ASK THE EXPERT: RUSTY BURLEW



## When is it Too Late to do an Oxalic Acid Vaporization (OAV) Treatment?

Dave Curtis asks: *I completed the mite strip treatments a couple of weeks ago. Now I am wondering when should I start my OAV treatments. I am in Minnesota.*

Rusty Burlew replies:

You can do OAV treatments any time during the year, including mid-winter. Oxalic acid vapor cannot penetrate the brood caps, so selecting a treatment time when the brood nest is small will give you the best results.

As a general rule, the amount of brood in a hive gets smaller and smaller until early January. At that time, brood rearing begins again, gradually at first, but at a steadily increasing rate. Remember, however, that every colony is an individual, so the perfect time will vary from hive to hive.

There is no easy way to determine when your particular brood nests are at their smallest other than inspecting the frames. Since that can be disturbing to the bees, most northern beekeepers simply use the calendar as a guide. November and December are good OAV treatment months because even if some brood is present, it will be a small amount, meaning not many varroa mites will be present under the caps.

Since you just finished a mite treatment, I think waiting until November or December would be prudent. Mite treatments can cause harm to bees, so it's my preference to give them some time to recover between assaults. You can probably get away with doing OAV right after mite strips, but I think the treatment would be both safer and more efficacious if done closer to the end of the year. 🍯

**RUSTY BURLEW** is a master beekeeper in Washington State with an undergraduate degree in agronomic crops and a master's degree in environmental studies with an emphasis on pollination ecology. Rusty owns HoneyBeeSuite.com, and is the director of the Native Bee Conservancy of Washington State.



OAV basic equipment, photo courtesy of Miller Bee Supply.

November and December are good OAV treatment months because even if some brood is present, it will be a small amount, meaning not many varroa mites will be present under the caps.

### Ask the Bee Expert!

Visit [backyardbeekeeping.iamcountryside.com](http://backyardbeekeeping.iamcountryside.com) and get answers to your beekeeping challenges through our live interactive chat. You can also email us at [editor@countrysidemag.com](mailto:editor@countrysidemag.com) or mail your inquiries to **P.O. Box 566, Medford, WI 54451**.



# GROW YOUR OWN SPUDS

ARTICLE AND PHOTOGRAPHY  
BY KRISTI COOK

**P**OTATOES ARE ONE OF the most versatile root vegetables to grace a garden. There are white potatoes, yellow potatoes, red potatoes, even purple potatoes. Starchy potatoes, dry potatoes, large potatoes, fingerling potatoes. If you enjoy potatoes, rest assured there's at least one variety that will suit your tastebuds. Even better, this humble root adapts well to several planting techniques provided you offer the right temperatures, the correct soil, and sufficient water.

## COOL WEATHER

The trickiest part when growing potatoes is the timing. Small tubers called seed potatoes are planted during cool weather when soil temps are around 45-55 degrees F. For most areas, this is within a week or two of the last frost or even a few weeks before the last frost date. Light frosts are usually handled well, provided a light row

cover or sheet is used to provide a bit of frost protection for those delicate growing leaves. However, if your area is expecting cooler than normal temps accompanied by a large amount of rain, it's best to have a slightly later planting date to avoid cool, soggy soil that can lead to rot. However, if tubers are already in the ground and settled in before less than perfect weather appears, many varieties will hold up well with only the smaller seed potatoes rotting.

## LOOSE SOIL

The second most important factor for a successful harvest is loose, friable soil. Potatoes don't grow well in heavy soils that don't allow the tubers to bulk up and spread out. Traditionally, seed potatoes are spaced 1-2' apart in a trench that's 6-8" deep, then covered with only a few inches of soil initially. Once the emerging green shoots reach about 6" tall, more loose soil is mounded



around the growing plant, leaving only the top half uncovered. Every couple of weeks, this hilling process is repeated until the hilled soil is about 8-10" above the ground.

However, the traditional method isn't the only way to grow potatoes. Tubers adapt readily to many different planting techniques. Perhaps the easiest is placing seed potatoes on top of freshly worked soil and then



covered with a few more inches of soil. No trenching nor hilling required. I’ve found this method particularly suited to those extra busy springs when I don’t have the time to make nice little hills nor perfectly measured trenches, and the potatoes do just fine so long as I don’t forget to water and mound up around them as they grow.

The key to making this method work is twofold. First, don’t tamp the soil down around the potato as it needs the soil beneath to remain loose for proper root growth. Then, place a good 2-3” of straw or other seedless mulch on top of the row to keep the loose soil from being washed away in rain or blown away in heavy winds. If you’re fortunate enough to have extra loose soil on hand instead of straw, toss that

soil on top in lieu of the straw. Follow up with a light watering to help the straw or extra soil lay down to protect the planting.

As in the traditional method, once the emerging greenery reaches 6” tall, begin hilling the plants with either soil, if it’s available, or thick layers of more straw. If using only straw, however, be sure to keep the straw moist and well-watered so the developing spuds don’t shrivel and dry up into nothing.

Other methods for growing potatoes, especially when space is limited, are in bags, buckets, totes, and even aged compost piles. Often, these methods incorporate a mix of compost and straw for the growing medium which helps keep the containers light enough for moving around as needed. Harvests with these methods are

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## DIY Seed Potatoes

Seed potatoes may be purchased by the pound or may come from the previous year’s harvest. Select tubers that have at least three eyes beginning to sprout. Cut large tubers containing numerous eyes into golfball-sized sections, ensuring three eyes remain on each cut piece. Leave tubers the size of a chicken egg whole. Place cut seed potatoes on newspaper and allow the cuts to heal over, or toughen, for a few days before planting. Plant cut side down with eyes pointing up.



**Top:** If planting tubers on hills is not your thing, simply dig several small holes a few inches deep into soft, friable soil and plant your seeds. This works especially well in raised beds and containers.

**Top left:** A thick layer of straw not only works as a hilling medium but also as a mulch to keep weeds down to a minimum throughout the growing season.

**Bottom left:** Hills are the most common method of planting potatoes and has the added benefit of keeping seeds up off of soggy, wet spring ground. This is the method I prefer when the planting season offers heavy spring rains.

**Right:** Digging for hidden treasures is an exciting family adventure.

often a bit smaller than when planting directly in the garden, yet are usually sufficient for the smaller scale gardener. And of course, they'll be just as tasty.

## HARVEST

Regardless of the method you choose, once the potatoes are hilled, the main objective is keeping them watered with 1-2" each week. Then, two to three weeks following flowering, gently dig up a few new potatoes for a meal, replacing the soil to protect the still developing tubers. You can collect these new potatoes from each plant usually once during the growing season with little noticeable reduction in overall production.

For the main harvest, wait until a couple of weeks after the foliage dies back, then gently dig up the remaining tubers. If you chose containers instead of the in-ground planting methods, just dump the entire container gently on the ground and run your fingers through the loose compost and straw to gather up your prizes. Do use a spade or shovel carefully, however, to avoid cutting into the tender flesh as any injuries to the tubers will reduce the storage life.

Once you have your harvest in hand, allow tubers to cure for three weeks in a cool, dry area out of direct sunlight. Store cured potatoes in a root cellar or, if the harvest is small enough, in an extra crisper drawer in the refrigerator. If your winters are mild enough, tubers can even be stored in the ground. The downside to this storage method is more tubers will rot as the winter progresses, but if you harvest frequently enough, the loss should be kept to a minimum.

Growing a winter stash of potatoes is a simple matter of correct timing, a bit of hill work, and good watering. And no matter what type of potato you prefer, there's sure to be a variety that will do well in your garden with your chosen method. The hard part is deciding which variety to try. 🌱

# POTATO VARIETIES

Potatoes fall into three basic categories: starchy, waxy, and all-purpose.

## STARCHY

Starchy potatoes are great for baking and frying. Because of their starch, they don't hold together very well when cooked, but they are fluffy and absorbent. They make perfect baked potatoes or french fries. They're decent mashed, but care must be taken not to over work them. Mashing them too vigorously or for too long releases lots of starch, which makes them gluey and unappetizing.

**EXAMPLES:** *Russets, Desiree, King Edward, Gold Rush, and many yams and sweet potato varieties.*

---

## WAXY

Waxy potatoes have a smoother, more waxy texture so they hold their shape while cooking. They are low in starch and high in moisture. They work well in dishes like soups, stews, potato salad, and scalloped potatoes where you would need to boil, slice, or roast.

**EXAMPLES:** *French fingerling, Red Bliss, Round White, Yellow Finnish, Jersey Royals.*

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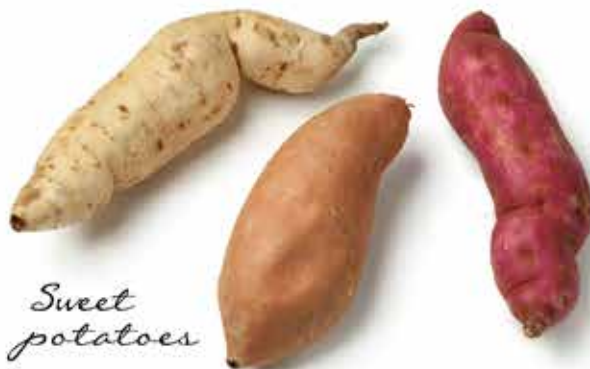
## ALL-PURPOSE

All-purpose potatoes have medium starch and medium moisture content. As the middle of the road potato, all-purpose potatoes usually suffice as a substitute for any starchy or waxy potato recipe.

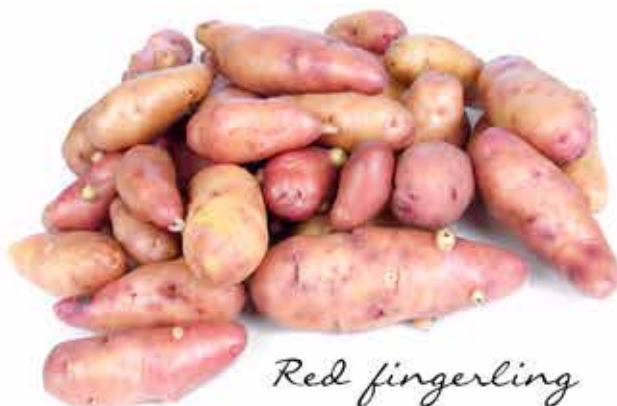
**EXAMPLES:** *Yukon Golds, white, and purple potatoes are among the most popular varieties of all-purpose potatoes.*



*Russet*



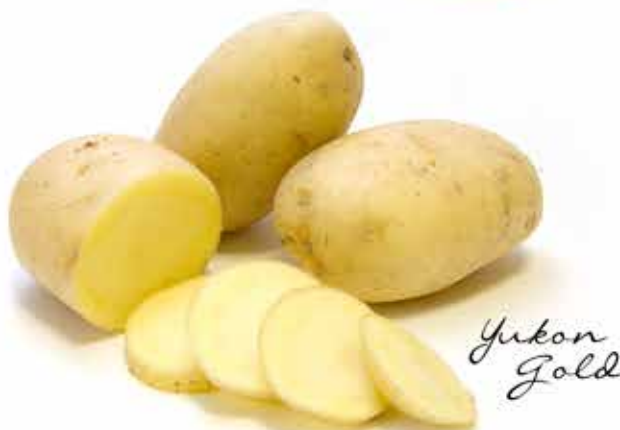
*Sweet potatoes*



*Red fingerling*



*Red potatoes*



*Yukon Gold*

# When to Plant Vegetables

## CHARTING FOR SUCCESS ALL SUMMER

BY REBECCA SANDERSON

Always Have Something to Harvest!

**W**HEN YOU PLANT YOUR VEGETABLE garden, you want to be sure that you can use all the food that grows. You also want to be sure that you constantly have food, not just at the very end. That can be easily done with a little extra planning and even a bit of math. Here we will detail how to plan a garden that will produce food throughout the growing season, without empty spots when one vegetable is done for the year.

I wish that I could give you very specific details of exactly when to plant, but that depends on your gardening zone and microclimates. More northern areas of the U.S. need very different plans from the southern parts of the U.S. The suggestions given will apply to most of the U.S. Gardeners in southern areas that have very hot summers and possibly don't freeze in the winter will plant their cool weather crops during winter and warm weather crops during spring or fall.

The basic principle of having a continual harvest is to vary what you plant when you plant, and always have something growing. Having knowledge of what plants prefer cooler weather versus the hot summers will help, as will time to harvest. When

one grouping is done, don't leave the soil bare. Immediately plant something else. Even if you have plans to plant the same cool-weather crop in both the spring and fall, you can use a very short-season crop to fill that ground in the between-time.

As you plan your garden area, first know which plants need a longer growing season. This includes tomatoes, onions, peppers, corn, carrots (most varieties, but some are short), melons, and winter squashes including pumpkins. Typical varieties of these vegetables take anywhere from 65-120 days to fully mature with usable produce. If you need food soon, you will be staring wistfully at those growing plants for at least two to four months. However, these are often staple crops that store well either through canning, freezing, or a root cellar. (Hint: you don't have to have a real root cellar to store root vegetables, just a dry, cool area. Also, store onions away from potatoes.)

Shorter season plants include mostly vegetables that prefer cooler weather. In some northern areas, you don't actually have to worry as much about the heat making plants bolt, but for the rest of us, planting accordingly will give the best harvest without losing

Have a plan for  
your garden to  
optimize your harvest  
potential!

plants. There are a few short-season plants that don't mind the summer heat, and there are also ways to shelter a plant from the worst of the heat. Planting in a more shady corner of your garden, using shade cloth, or pairing the plants with ones that grow taller can help keep them cool during the heat of the day. Planting smaller patches of some plants a few weeks apart will also spread out your harvest.

Here is a chart that details when to plant certain popular vegetables. Again, this chart is applicable to most of the U.S., but a few very

southern parts may have to adjust. Plant names that are in bold text tend to produce for many weeks; the days to harvest are simply how long until the first fruits come. Remember that these numbers are averages, and there are often varieties that take more or less time. If the name is specified with "plant" then the days to harvest are after transplanting a live seedling.

The Early Spring grouping can all be planted a few weeks before the average last frost date of your area. Growing up in Idaho, I remember always planting peas on the first

weekend of April. Our average last frost date wasn't until mid-May. These plants tend to be resilient to light frosts. You may still want to cover them with a sheet or blanket if a hard frost or snow is forecasted. Because many of these plants bolt in higher temperatures (some as low as 75 degrees F), you want as much growing time before your temperatures are consistently high. If things go well, you may be harvesting spinach at the same time that you are planting summer squashes. Right there, you can plant the summer squash in the middle of the spinach row, and it will grow as you continue to harvest the spinach completely. No wasted soil.

The Midspring grouping would prefer not to have below-freezing temperatures, but a light frost won't necessarily spell doom upon your harvest. If you are having a warm year, feel free to plant these crops a couple of weeks before your average last frost date. If your spring seems to be late, maybe wait a week or two before planting. Here we have a mix of shorter and longer growing plants that are more tolerant of the summer heat, but often prefer to start when the weather is still cool.

## Planting Chart

Early Spring	Days to Harvest	Midspring	Days to Harvest	Early Summer	Days to Harvest	Midsummer to Autumn	Days to Harvest
Broccoli Plants	60-80	Onion sets	100	Bean (Bush)	50-60	Beet	55-70
Cabbage Plants	45-110	Cauliflower	55-80	Bean (Pole)	65-85	Broccoli Seed or Plant	90-110
Peas	55-80	Beet	55-70	Potatoes	70-120	Cabbage Seed or Plant	45-110
Lettuce	45-84	Carrot	60-85	Corn	60-100	Carrot	60-85
Spinach	40-50	Parsnip	120	Pepper Plant	60-90	Cauliflower	70-80
Radish	21-30	Swiss Chard	60	Tomato Plant	60-85	Lettuce	45-84
Turnip	30-60			Eggplant Plant	80-110	Radish	21-30
Endive	85-100			Melon	75-100	Spinach	40-50
Brussel Sprouts	100-110			Cucumber	55-60	Turnip	30-60
				Summer Squash	50-60		
				Winter Squash	75-110		
				Pumpkin	100-120		
				Okra	60		

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Our Early Summer list cannot handle even the slightest frost. Many of these are started indoors and transplanted to extend the growing season because they take too long to reach maturity otherwise. Many of these can be put in as your early spring crops finish.

The grouping of Midsummer to Autumn is mostly repeats of the early spring vegetables. That is because by the time they are growing, the weather has mellowed, and they are not likely to bolt or become bitter. For fall crops, take your average first frost date and count backward using the average days to harvest, and then give yourself a couple more days.

You can also take advantage of crops that overwinter in the ground such as garlic. Because garlic is harvested midsummer, it may leave a hole in your garden. Utilize this by placing young plants around the established garlic that won't be harmed by a little root disturbance. The garlic doesn't have a big root system, so pulling it up won't affect the other plants much. This doesn't work well for root vegetables that don't like being disturbed, but above-ground vegetables will accept it better. Tomatoes love garlic, by the way.

You can have food throughout the entire growing season as long as you vary what you plant when you plant, and always have something in every space. 🌱

**REBECCA SANDERSON** grew up in a very small town in Idaho with a backyard full of chickens, goats, sometimes sheep and ducks, and other random animals in addition to the cats and dogs. She is now married with two little girls and loves the homesteading life! Her husband is very supportive (tolerant) of her continued experiments in making many items from scratch and he even helps sometimes.



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# Selling Eggs as a Business on the Homestead

BY AMY FEWELL

**T**HERE ARE CHICKENS in the backyard, eggs all over the kitchen, and you might be thinking, “Maybe it’s time to start selling eggs.” Or, maybe you’ve been trying to have an egg business for a while and it’s just not taking off like you thought it would. Either way, there’s sometimes a right and wrong way to have a successful egg business. If you’re getting ready to dive into selling eggs, or if your business just hasn’t taken off surpassing your coworkers and family members, then you might want to think about a few things that will help you be successful.

## START WITH BEAUTIFUL EGGS

You know the old saying that something won’t “sell itself” or “clean itself?” I can hear my grandmother saying it to this day, “Well, the dishes aren’t going to clean themselves!” The same goes for the chicken eggs you collect each and every day. Though, you have a slight advantage. Homegrown chicken eggs are already so much more beautiful than store-bought eggs. With their hints of blues, greens, chocolates, and more, make sure you’re adding a few colored egg layers to your

Homegrown chicken eggs are much more beautiful than store-bought eggs.

flock to make your customers feel special. And make sure your eggs are clean before packaging.

Some of the best chickens for eggs are Leghorns, Plymouth Rocks, and sex-links. But if you really want to stand apart, try a few Olive Eggers, Ameracaunas, or Marans.

Either way, your eggs should be clean and neatly placed in their cartons. Your customers will appreciate it! Also, keep in mind that most states require you to wash and refrigerate your eggs. There is also a limit to the number of eggs you can sell in certain states before you require a permit. You may also need to learn how to get NPIP Certified. Make sure you do your research.

## THE EGG PACKAGING

Packaging your eggs in Styrofoam containers is the norm, but it means that’s what every other chicken keeper in the community is doing as well. Why not take it up a notch with your delivery? Packaging your eggs in fresh, new cartons with a label will help customers feel like they’re getting a quality product. Tie a piece of twine around the cartons with a sprig

of rosemary. Or even use your own stamp or label to affix your farm or homestead name on the packaging.

Try using brown cardboard cartons that are biodegradable instead of the bright pink and blue Styrofoam ones that come from your local grocery store. You may have to purchase the new cartons, but they aren't that expensive. The key to selling eggs is getting your eggs and packaging right, and then you can move onto your target market, which we'll get to next.

Just remember that people want to purchase your eggs because they are homegrown and different from the store. While most of your customers won't care, your higher-end customers won't want to receive eggs in used grocery store containers. They'll want to see that it came directly from your farm. Marketing and branding is everything!

### MARKETING YOUR EGG BUSINESS

Now that you have beautiful eggs and cartons, to whom are you going to sell these eggs? If you're just selling to family and friends, you could probably skip the beautifying stage. But if you're looking for a hardcore egg market to make money off of your eggs, then you'll probably need to do all of the things I've mentioned, and then you'll have to travel.

Remember, your local community is generally saturated with people just like you. If they aren't already raising their own chickens, they know a friend or a cousin's uncle that does. Be prepared to go a little bit outside of your community to find the best bang for your buck.

Here are ways to market your eggs:

- First, find a central location where you can do weekly or monthly drop-offs for eggs. This will look different for everyone, but can generally be a store, parking lot, or right on your own property. This allows people to travel to you, rather than you running all over to travel to them.

Sometimes you can even tag-team with a farmers market or local business and allow them to sell the eggs for you. Whatever you decide, make it easy

on yourself, and then market the heck out of your eggs so that people want to come and get them.

- Find your price range: It's easier for someone to hand you a five-dollar bill than three individual dollars. You put a lot of time and effort into those eggs and chickens. Don't shortchange yourself. Your eggs will still be cheaper than the six to eight dollar free-range eggs at the store.

If you live in an extremely rural community, however, you may have to lessen your price. The rule of thumb is generally not to go below three dollars for a dozen eggs in just about any part of the country, though.

- Place your eggs on local farm sale websites: Social media, local newspapers, online groups, and forums are all great places to market your eggs. Add a photo and the pick-up time and location for each week.
- Give your customers business cards and ask them to tag you on social media: No shame in your game! Tell your customers to help you spread the



The key to selling eggs is getting your eggs and packaging right, and then you can move onto your target market.



Get your name and product out into the community.  
Brand your cartons, business cards, and social media.

word by handing out business cards to their friends and family. Better yet, have them take photos of their beautiful new eggs and post them on social media. They can tag your business or farm and people can find out the location and pick up times that way.

- Get online: That's right. Even if you're adamantly against it, every farm business needs a social media page and website. If nothing more, try starting an online private Facebook group or Instagram page. This way you can let customers and potential customers know important updates and announcements.
- Be consistent: If you say you're going to be somewhere at a certain time when it comes to pick up and drop off — be there! Even if you only have a

few customers coming one week, don't make them wait until next week. Consistency is important so that your customer trusts you.

- Sell to farm stores: Farm stores and mom and pop shops are often looking to partner with chicken keepers so they can sell their eggs.

#### GET PERSONAL WITH YOUR EGGS

More than anything, remember that your eggs have a story. Tell that story to your customers, your friends, and your online community. Tell them how much more nutritional they are than store eggs. Tell them about the hardships of chicken keeping . . . and the blessings too! Share photos of your average everyday life on the farmstead. People want to truly know their farmer. They like

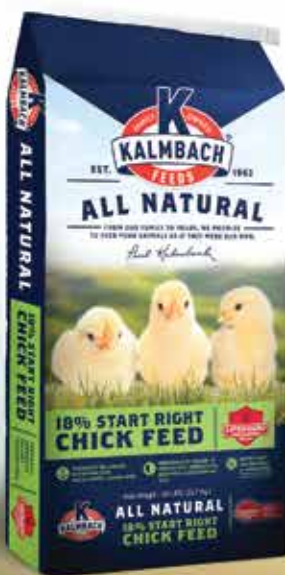
knowing your chickens, watching your family grow, and feeling connected to their food. So, let them get to know you . . . and your eggs.

Whatever you decide to do in your egg business, know that you're helping people by offering your beautiful, orange-yolked eggs to your community. They are so much healthier, and your community will thank you! 🌱

**AMY FEWELL** is the head chicken wrangler and homesteader at The Fewell Homestead. Along with her family, she resides in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia. She is the founder of the Homesteaders of America conference and organization, and the author of the books, *The Homesteader's Herbal Companion* and *The Homesteader's Natural Chicken Keeping Handbook*.  
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## DEVELOPING MOONBEAM CHICKENS

A New Breed of Black and White

BY REBECCA SANDERSON

**F**OR A YEAR AND A HALF, Danielle has been working to develop a new breed of chickens, and she is almost there. These chickens have black skin and beaks with stark white feathers. She calls them Moonbeam chickens.

In early 2018, Danielle drove from Ohio to neighboring Indiana to buy some Silkie chickens. While there, she noticed a few chickens with black skin and white feathers, so she begged the purchase of one. This beautiful hen became the inspiration behind breeding chickens specifically to have those characteristics. Unfortunately, due to crop issues, the hen did not live long enough to produce chicks to pass on her traits.

Because the inspiration Moonbeam hen did not live to hatch chicks, Danielle had to start from scratch on attempting to breed chickens that would produce black skin and white feathers. She began with fibromelanistic breeds for the black skin and beaks. Fibromelanistic chickens have hyperpigmentation, or more than the normal amount of melanin, in every cell of their body. This makes their skin, beak, feathers, and internal organs black. This melanin gene is dominant, so Danielle had to find chickens in which white feathers are also dominant to try to counteract the feather color.

Going back to high school biology, genes are segments of your DNA that code for a specific trait, like eye color, skin color, or blood type. These genes can be dominant, recessive, or even co-dominant. If a chicken has white feathers, the gene could be either dominant or recessive. It is possible for recessive genes to be more common than dominant ones especially if breeders have specifically bred for those traits in the past. If you only breed recessive white chickens to other recessive white chickens, then you will only get white chickens. If you breed one chicken with recessive white to another with a dominant brown color, the chicken will be brown. However, with co-dominant genes, they are expressed as a mixture of the two genes. For example, a white chicken and a black chicken, both with dominant color genes, could

Fibromelanistic chickens have hyperpigmentation that makes their skin, beak, feathers, and internal organs black. This melanin gene is dominant, so Danielle had to find chickens in which white feathers are also dominant to try to counteract the feather color.

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produce a gray chicken. It was difficult for Danielle to know if a certain breed of white chickens had dominant or recessive genes for the white feathers. She had a bit of trial and error just figuring out which ones could give her white feathers at all when bred to black fibromelanistic chickens. At first, she would end up with mostly chickens that had “dirty white” feather color and dark mulberry-colored skin, not quite black. As Danielle continued breeding chickens, she would often have batches where one chick out of five was what she was looking for or at least moving in the right direction towards. When breeding for specific traits, that one is what you keep and add to the breeding pool. Fortunately, Danielle is getting more and more chicks in every batch now that has the Moonbeam characteristics. She believes that in one or two more generations, she will be satisfied with her results.

One of the setbacks in this project came in the form of the roosters. Even though hens often

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While Danielle doesn't want to disclose the parent breeds of her Moonbeam chickens, she will say that they are NOT from Silkies or Mosaics as others have hypothesized.

showed the proper coloring from early on in the Moonbeam project, the roosters still displayed more reddish skin and silvery feathers rather than white especially as they aged. But, Danielle has finally hatched a rooster that looks as though he will keep the proper coloring even as he ages. While Danielle doesn't want to disclose the parent breeds of her Moonbeam chickens, she will say that they are NOT from Silkies or Mosaics as others have hypothesized. Danielle has shared that there are probably about six different chicken breeds that make up the genetic background of her Moonbeam chickens.

While there is already much interest in buying her Moonbeam chickens, Danielle is still waiting to open up sales until the breeding project is complete. The Moonbeam project will not be complete until the chickens breed true, meaning that all the offspring look like the parents. Currently, about 25% of the chicks are still black-feathered, and there is the occasional blue colored chick. However, more than half of the chickens are breeding true. This is good news because Danielle wants to see two full




generations breeding true before opening the line up for public sale.

You can follow the development of the Moonbeam chickens through Danielle's Instagram page Hot off the Nest or her Facebook page by the same name. Danielle loves to see the interest of other people through social media. She has even inspired others to begin their own breeding projects.

For Danielle, the best support of her Moonbeam project would be that people would continue the breeding of the line if they purchase from her. She has put a lot of time and effort into these chickens, and it would be nice to see them continue, even adding in other lines if someone else develops a black-skinned white-feathered breed. Danielle has devoted so much to this project that she has even taken

a small step back from her beautiful show chickens, not keeping or breeding as many in the past year.

If you are considering breeding chickens for a certain trait, Danielle urges others to follow her protocol. While she is breeding Moonbeam chickens primarily for how they look, she does not keep aggressive, moody, or poorly mothering chickens in her breeding pool. Her chickens will not only be beautiful, but they will have a good temperament as well.

She believes that there are too many breeders who ignore personality and focus solely on appearance. Even from the parent breeds before the Moonbeam coloring started appearing, Danielle selected breeds and specific chickens for personality as well as looks. 

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# How to Tell if Eggs are Bad

By Jeremy Chartier

FLOCK  
FILES

Proponents of the float test say that eggs that float are bad, and those that sink are good, but that may not be true.

Eggshells are porous, which allows air, moisture, and some contaminants to pass through. Spoilage bacteria are the most common culprits of eggs turning rotten. When laid, the hen deposits a protective bloom, but this cuticle is not completely impenetrable, so whether or not you wash the egg, bacteria will eventually traverse that porous shell.



**Cracked/Compromised Eggshells** — Contaminants find it far easier to enter the egg if the shell is compromised. Additionally, visibly soiled eggs are likely to have an excessive bacterial load. Dirty or broken eggs should be tossed.

**Candling** — Using an egg candling tool or a powerful flashlight, illuminate your eggs and observe contents. If the albumin appears translucent and you can see an egg yolk, things are looking good. Branch-like structures indicate a partially incubated egg. If you can't see defined shapes, it appears solid, or all you can see is an air cell, that egg has likely gone bad. If cracks in the shell become visible when candling, trash it.

**Crack It Open** — Is anything out of the ordinary? Is there an odor? If anything makes you second guess your eggs, ditch them. Sometimes a fresh-cracked egg will have a green tinge, indicative of a higher-than-average concentration of riboflavin (vitamin B2). Although it looks odd, it's safe to eat.

## They Might Not Be Bad If...

**Oxidation** — Oxidation occurs when oxygen causes fats and proteins to break down. Albumin and yolk of an older, deteriorated egg will not sit as tall in the pan as a fresh one, is waterier, and spreads out farther. This does not mean the egg is inedible, but it is evidence of decay. Eggs appropriately washed and stored in a refrigerator are more likely to dehydrate before they turn rancid.

**Buoyancy** — Place an egg into a container of water. If the egg sinks, it weighs more than the water it displaces. If it floats, it weighs less. But just because an egg floats doesn't mean it's gone foul. It might mean it's old and dehydrated, but a fresh egg can also float. A sinking egg could be perfectly good, gone rotten, or even have a developing embryo. Results should not be relied upon to determine if eggs are bad.

**Expiration Dates** — "Sell by" dates cannot exceed 30 days from packaging date, and "use by" dates are not to exceed 45 days from packaging. After 45 days, the USDA says the interior quality of the eggs begins to diminish. It doesn't mean they've gone rancid; but they have started to degrade.

Just because an egg passes muster doesn't mean it's guaranteed safe to eat raw. It's best to thoroughly cook eggs to kill bacteria. Refrigerate clean eggs in clean cartons for the best storage. Candling can tell you what's going on inside your eggs. Don't rely on the float test, and lastly, trust your nose. If the egg you cracked smells bad, then it is.

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READER-SUGGESTED STORY

# American Guinea Hogs

A FRIENDLY, EASY-TO-MANAGE BREED

ARTICLE BY JANET GARMAN | PHOTOS BY REBECCA SAUL

**A**MERICAN GUINEA HOGS could be the best choice for homesteading families. The all-black, small-sized hog is a champion at foraging for food and requires little to no additional grain feeding. Guinea hogs are a popular choice for homesteads for their easy-going, non-aggressive disposition.

Today's American Guinea hog bears a slight resemblance to the guinea hog of the late 1800s. A previously imported Red Guinea hog was much bigger and of course, red. The consensus is that today's black guinea hog is a heritage, landrace breed developed in the United States in the years before World War II. It most likely has some shared history with the British Improved Essex hog. The breed became threatened with numbers of less than 100 after the war. As our food system became more commercially produced, the homesteads breeds were left to die out.

By 1990, the American Guinea breed was a threatened, rare breed hog. Its current conservation status with the Livestock Breed Conservancy is still threatened. The non-profit, American Guinea Hog

Association, is working to build up the numbers of this breed while preserving their unique genetic makeup.

## STANDARDS AND SIZING FOR AMERICAN GUINEA HOGS

**Height** – Males typically are 22 to 27 inches tall and females might be a little shorter. The hogs are small with a length of 46 to 56 inches from head to tail.

**Weight** – For adult hogs is between 150 and 200 pounds. The breed tends to put on too much weight so careful monitoring of scraps and any additional feed products is important.

**Coloring** – Predominantly or exclusively black. Small amounts of white points are acceptable for registered hogs. There is a rare recessive gene for red hair. The hair is coarse.

**Ears** – The ears on American Guinea hogs are upright.

**Tail** – One curl in the tail is the accepted standard.

**Temperament** – One of the best features of this hardy hog is the pleasant, easy-going temperament. For

a small homestead setting, a calm, friendly pig personality is a must, particularly when children are present.

### WHAT ARE AMERICAN GUINEA HOGS USED FOR?

This breed adapts well to rough forage, pasture, and garden cleanup. Their tendency to become overweight if fed commercial feed makes them an ideal homestead hog. They normally thrive without any additional feed cost than the forage grown on the property. They adapt well to a barnyard setting and get along well with other farm animals. In addition, the Guinea hogs may help rid your barn area of rodents and snakes.



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The American Guinea hog can fill the need for land clearing, kitchen scrap recycling, rooting up the depleted garden, and pest control.

The primary purpose of the American Guinea hog is meat production. The yield for a typical full-grown hog is 75 pounds or higher hanging weight.

#### WHAT MAKES SMALLER HOGS IN DEMAND WITH HOMESTEADERS TODAY?

Smaller hogs fit the needs of homesteaders raising food on smaller acreage. Many homestead families are raising their own meat. A large hog would return too much meat for one family, along with a varied diet of other proteins for the freezer space.

Rebecca Saul, of Glimfeather Farms in Central Oregon, chose the American Guinea hog as the pig breed for their family homestead. Rebecca states, "We chose the American Guinea hog for several different reasons. We have smaller children so we wanted to make sure whichever breed we got would not be too overwhelming for them to help out with. We liked that they are a hardy breed, as we live in the high desert of Oregon where

temperatures and weather can fluctuate significantly even in a single day. I am also a soap maker, and the AGH has a high yield of lard which I then render and use in many of my bars. When a friend of mine had a couple of piglets available, we jumped at the chance to add them to our homestead."

#### OTHER SMALL HOG BREEDS

The Ossabaw hog and the KuneKune are also favorably considered by homesteaders looking to raise hogs.

In addition to the sustainable meat source, small-scale farming families are increasingly aware of the benefits of regenerative grazing practices. Hogs in general, and particularly hog breeds that forage well, fit perfectly into a scenario using rotational grazing and foraging. The American Guinea hog can fill the need for land clearing, kitchen scrap recycling, rooting up the depleted garden, and pest control. In return, the hogs chosen for butchering supply a healthy protein for the family table.

Lard from the carcass fills other sustainable fat needs. Cooking, baking, and candles are a few uses for rendered pig fat.

#### SMALLER HOG BREEDS ARE MORE ECONOMICAL

American Guinea hogs are smaller than traditional full-size hogs, meaning that they require less feed. Also, their excellent foraging and grazing conversion means they do not require much if any, additional grain. This saves the owner a good amount of money over the year.

Feeding grain is an expensive way to raise meat. The meat from grass-fed livestock has a superior taste, marbling, and texture that is not found in grain-fed livestock. If you plan to raise pork for market, grass-fed meat is in high demand, due to taste, and the higher presence of omega-3 fatty acids.

#### GOOD TEMPERAMENTS


Farmers raising smaller pig breeds praise their temperaments. Easy going, calm, gentle, and

loveable are terms often used to describe the American Guinea hog and other smaller pig breeds.

### IS THE AMERICAN GUINEA HOG RIGHT FOR YOUR FARM?

Rebecca Saul says, "I would hesitate to recommend any breed of pig to a new homesteader, as pigs can be more difficult to contain than other animals and their temperaments can be finicky; especially when there are piglets involved. The American Guinea hog is the one I would recommend to someone ready and willing to take on the adventure of welcoming a heritage small-size hog breed onto their homestead."

For the most part, the Saul family has found the breed friendly and calm. Some of the pigs will flop over for belly rubs when they approach. They love back scratches and are fun to watch rolling around in the mud. I prefer working with gilts or barrows, as boars and sows can get somewhat pushy and aggressive as they get older, and we have found the sows to be extremely protective of their piglets. The females do co-parent if they farrow in close time to each other, which is a really neat thing to see; but it also means you have two angry mommas chasing you when you need to catch a piglet!

The American Guinea hog might be just the right pig breed for you. As with any breed of animal, reach out to experienced breeders in your area, like Rebecca, and ask many questions. Once you realize all that is involved in raising a small breed pig, adding pigs for meat production is a good way to add a sustainable meat source to your homestead. 



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# Best Beef Cattle Breeds

## Which One is Right for You?

BY HEATHER SMITH THOMAS



Black Angus cattle.

**E**VERY BREED HAS PLUSSES and minuses, and what might be a plus for one farmer could be a drawback in another situation. For instance, a breed that does well in a hot climate may not do well in a cold one, and vice versa. Some breeds are better than others for finishing on grass. If you have a small farm and your kids are helping handle the cattle, you want a breed with a gentle disposition. It's important to choose a breed that fits your goals and purposes. Here are descriptions of most of the breeds you'll encounter, but you can find more details on their websites.

Breeds in North America include British breeds like Angus, Hereford, and Shorthorn; continental (European) breeds like Charolais, Simmental, Salers, Limousin, Gelbieh, Braunvieh, Tarentaise, Chianina, Maine Anjou, Blonde d'Aquitaine, Piedmontese, Romagnola; American breeds that were created by mixing British and/or continental breeds with Brahman to produce better hot-climate cattle (Brangus, Braford, Charbray, Santa Gertrudis, Beefmaster, etc.), or the Texas Longhorn descended from feral Spanish cattle in the Southwest; and breeds from other continents such as Watusi, Wagyu, Murray Grey, etc. Various breeds can be crossed to add traits that you might desire in your beef animals or brood cows.

### ANGUS

Angus are black and genetically polled (no horns). Breed traits include fast growth, marbled

meat (flecks of fat, making it tender and juicy), and maternal ability (aggressive, protective mothers that produce a lot of milk for their calves). A separate breed of Red Angus was created by selecting Angus with a recessive red gene.

Angus and Angus-cross calves are popular with feedlot buyers because of their excellent carcass traits. Angus cows are popular with many ranchers because they are good mothers and require very little care at calving. They are not always the best choice for beginners because of their hot-headed nature, though there are some mellow individuals. If you want to be up close and personal with your cows, choose a breed with a calmer disposition or find a breeder who has selected mellow Angus for easy-handling.

### HEREFORDS

Herefords are large-framed and heavy-boned with a red body and white face, feet, belly, and tail switch, and horns. Today there are also polled Herefords, created in the early 1900s by selectively breeding a few mutant Herefords that had no horns. Most Herefords are docile and mellow, which makes them excellent for beginners.

### SHORTHORNS

Shorthorns originated as dual-purpose cattle (meat and milk). They are red, white, roan or spotted, and horned. Calves are small at birth (easy calving) but grow fast. Today in the U.S., there are two registries —

for milking Shorthorns and beef Shorthorns. Milking ability, fast growth, and tractability make this breed a good choice for small farmers who want to raise beef.

### **SIMMENTALS**

Simmentals originated in Switzerland as dairy animals. Yellow-brown with white markings, these cattle are noted for rapid growth, large frame, and milk production. They became popular for crossbreeding to create larger, fast-growing cattle. They are slower to mature than British breeds, taking longer to reach finish weight. Beginning stockmen desiring to use this breed should keep disposition in mind and select carefully since some individuals are flighty and hot-headed.

### **CHAROLAIS**

Charolais are large, white, heavy-muscled cattle that originated in France as draft animals. They are noted for feed efficiency, heavy weaning weights, and extensive muscling. Many stockmen use Charolais bulls on cows of other breeds for a terminal cross (selling all offspring as beef) to produce fast-gaining large calves that do well in the feedlot. One of the biggest drawbacks to the breed has been calving difficulty because calves are large and thick at birth. Some breeders have selected for lower birthweights to get away from this problem.

### **LIMOUSIN**

Limousin is an old breed from western France. Red-gold and well-muscled, these cattle are finer boned than Charolais (less calving problems) but grow as rapidly. Some breeders have created a black, polled version. Like other continental breeds, Limousin has been crossed with other breeds to increase size and weaning weight.



Austrian Simmental.

The calves grow faster and larger than British breeds, but are slower maturing and do not finish as quickly. Disposition should be taken into consideration when selecting stock for a small farm.

### **GELBVIEH**

Gelbvieh are tan/gold and originated in Austria/Germany as multi-purpose cattle (meat, milk, and draft). They are fast-growing and mature quicker than some other European breeds. They are noted for high fertility, calving ease, and mothering ability. As in all continental breeds, selection for disposition is important, since some are less easy to handle than others.

### **SALERS**

Salers are dark red cattle from France and popular for crossbreeding because of calving ease, hardiness, good milking ability, and fertility. Some breeders in America are now producing black, polled Salers. This breed has a bad reputation

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for disposition, and though there are some mellow family lines, the hot-headed flightiness of some of these cattle can make them a poor choice for beginners.

### TARENDAISE

Tarentaise originated in the French Alps as dual-purpose (meat and milk) animals, related to Brown Swiss. Cherry red with darker ears, nose, and feet, they are moderate size (one of the smaller continental breeds), highly fertile, and early maturing. Due to their origins in the rugged Alps, these cattle are hardier than most European breeds, and also have less calving and fertility problems than some of the larger cattle. They work well in crossbreeding programs or where cattle must utilize marginal grazing land.

### CHIANINA

Chianina are white Italian cattle originally used as draft animals. They are the largest cattle; mature



Chianina, white Italian cattle, originally were used as draft animals.

bulls stand more than six feet tall at the shoulder and may weigh 4,000 pounds. These cattle are well-muscled and long-legged. In America, they are primarily used for crossbreeding — as a terminal cross with all calves marketed as

beef (no females kept). Since they are high-strung and huge, they are not a good choice for beginners.

### AMERICAN BRAHMAN

American Brahman cattle were developed from several strains of Indian cattle, including some from Brazil. Calves are small at birth, grow fast, but do not become sexually mature as quickly as British breeds. Heat-tolerant and resistant to ticks and insects, these large cattle have loose floppy skin on dewlap, brisket, and belly, large droopy ears, horns that curve up and back, and can be any color. In a hot climate, they do well. Shy and flighty, they are not a good choice for beginners unless handled carefully. With selection and proper handling, however, they can become very docile.

### BEEFMASTER

Beefmaster is an American breed produced by crossing Brahman with Shorthorn and Hereford to create a heat-tolerant animal with good beef production. Beefmaster cattle today are slightly less than half Brahman and slightly



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### SANTA GERTRUDIS

Santa Gertrudis were created on the King Ranch in Texas by crossing Brahman with Shorthorn. These red cattle are heat-tolerant, with good beef production. They are approximately  $\frac{5}{8}$  Shorthorn and  $\frac{3}{8}$  Brahman, known for easy calving, good mothering ability, and improved beef quality over the Brahman. They gain weight nicely on grass, and outperform British and continental breeds in hot climates, but they may be too flighty for an inexperienced stockman.

### MURRAY GREY

Murray Grey are moderate-sized, silver-gray cattle descended from one Shorthorn cow in Australia who produced 12 gray calves when bred to Angus bulls. These polled cattle have easy-born, fast-growing calves. They have high-quality meat, good milk and mothering ability, and better dispositions than most Angus cattle — traits that make them attractive to the small farmer.

### SCOTCH HIGHLAND

Scotch Highland cattle originated in Scotland, surviving in the highlands on sparse, coarse native forage. They have impressive horns and long hair. Most are red but may range from tan to black — with an occasional white or dun. As one of the hardiest breeds, they survive in poor conditions where other cattle perish. Calves are born small

but grow rapidly. Mature animals are small compared to most beef breeds. Due to ease of calving, hardiness, and dramatic hybrid vigor when crossed with other cattle, they are sometimes used in crossbreeding programs to produce efficient, hardy range cattle.

### GALLOWAYS

Galloways, another Scottish breed, are polled, black (though a few are red, white, or dun), and sturdy, with long shaggy hair that sheds in summer. They handle severe winter weather and keep foraging in deep snow. Calves are born small and hardy and gain rapidly. These cattle are efficient and can do well on grass, without grain, producing a trim carcass with a high percentage of meat.

### DEVON CATTLE

Devon cattle originated in southwestern England as draft animals and were later selected for beef traits, producing flavorful meat on native grasses. This is a popular breed for people who raise grass-finished beef.

### RED POLL

Red Poll originated in England as dual-purpose animals. Cows are highly fertile, and calves are small but grow fast. Since this breed is not closely related to other beef breeds, it can be utilized in a crossbreeding program to obtain exceptional hybrid vigor. This breed has been used primarily for grass finishing, reaching market weight at a young age, and excels in meat quality (marbling and tenderness) without grain.

### WELSH BLACK

Welsh Black cattle originated along the coast of Wales. They have excellent disposition; they were historically raised and tended by women. Harsh weather


and poor grazing developed an ability to get by on minimal forage and they handle cold weather better than most breeds. Originally bred for milk as well as meat, the cows raise fast-growing calves. The cows are good mothers, fertile, and long-lived.

### DEXTERS

The smallest beef cattle are Dexters, originating in southern Ireland, bred by farmers with small holdings in the mountains. The cattle foraged in rough country adjacent to little farms. These small, gentle cattle need less feed than other breeds and thrive in a variety of climates. Calves are born easily and grow fast, maturing by 12 to 18 months of age as finished beef.

### WAGYU

Wagyu cattle originated in Japan and are known for highly-marbled, tasty meat — which will be the highest-priced meat on the menu at a good restaurant. Small farmers who raise Wagyu often process and sell the meat directly to consumers.

The breed you choose will depend on your goals and purposes — and how you want to raise and market them. 

#### HEATHER SMITH THOMAS

ranches with her husband near Salmon, Idaho, raising cattle and a few horses. She has a B.A. in English and history. She has raised and trained horses for 50 years, and has been writing freelance articles and books nearly that long, publishing 20 books and more than 9,000 articles for horse and livestock publications.

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# SOAY SHEEP

READER-SUGGESTED STORY

## A TOUGH LITTLE SURVIVOR FOR SUSTAINABLE FARMING

BY TAMSIN COOPER

**W**HAT CAN BE MORE SUITABLE for the homestead than hardy, self-sufficient, naturally molting sheep? What can be more striking than a herd of graceful, deer-like ewes and rams with magnificent curling horns? What can be more endearing than curious, playful animals, prancing across the meadow! Soay sheep are all of these things, and more ... their unique nature makes them perfect for ecology management, low-input farming, and toughing out the harshest climates.

### HARDY AND SELF-SUFFICIENT

Soay sheep are small and light-footed, leaving little impact on the land while grazing all manner of weeds and brush in preference to grass. This includes blackberry, thistle, and emerging poison oak. Their long history on the stormy north Atlantic coast of Scotland has given them robust hardiness unknown to most modern sheep. Their primitive gene pool retains disease-resistant

Soay sheep are small and light-footed, leaving little impact on the land.

and parasite-tolerant traits, while their hooves need minimal maintenance. Short, thin tails avoid fly-strike and do not need docking. Best of all, they don't need shearing. Soay shed their wool naturally in summer after lambing. Shepherds can simply roo their flock, which means gently plucking excess wool by hand. As

sheep can stand for rooing, there is no need to tip them. This makes rooing a less stressful experience and a good opportunity to bond.

Soay sheep spent many generations as ferals and know how to look after themselves. Ewes lamb easily and make excellent mothers, while lambs are quick risers. Although they mature slowly, ewes can continue lambing until 10 or 12 years old. With

nimble bodies and strong legs, Soay actively explore and browse a variety of plants, climbing difficult terrain in their search for forage. Perfect for woodland and hill pastures, they make use of marginal land unsuitable for other sheep breeds. They are wary, alert

to predators, and rather shy, but they tame well with patient and gentle exposure to people. Then we can experience the charming and inquisitive side of their nature.

With these excellent qualities, why is this ancient breed now so rare? Human preference for white wool and larger, faster-growing animals drove remaining flocks to a remote existence on the Scottish Islands of St. Kilda, where they have been left feral to this day. Despite the popularity of modern meat and fiber sheep, small farms, conservationists, and homesteaders are rediscovering the value of their flavorsome, lean meat, colored fiber, and landscape management skills.

#### HISTORY

Neolithic farmers gradually brought sheep to Europe from

Shepherds can simply roo their flock, which means gently plucking excess wool by hand.



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Soay ewe in Wales. Photo credit: Heather Smithers/flickr.com CC BY-SA 2.0\*

Most Soay sheep are horned, although some have smaller deformed horns (scurs) and some ewes are polled.

the Near East around 8,000 years ago and into Britain about 6,000 years ago. These sheep would have initially been similar to their ancestor, the mouflon, having hair coats with an insulating under-layer in winter. However, early farmers had already developed the undercoat to a fine wool and reduced the hair to a sparse kemp by the time Soay sheep were abandoned in St. Kilda. In 55 BCE, Romans documented small primitive sheep resembling Soay in the British Isles, but these were soon crossed to hornless Roman sheep with lustrous, wavy fleece until the original landrace was almost lost. A relict of Neolithic sheep has remained on the islet of Soay in St. Kilda for about 4,000 years. The name comes from old Norse, Seyðoy, meaning island of sheep.

Soay is an uninhabited isle, facing ferocious winds and storms and unpredictable weather. Sheep living there were untouched by human selection since Roman times. Natural selection ensured that only the toughest have survived until the present day. Crofters inhabited a nearby island, Hirta, until 1930. They visited Soay to harvest feral sheep wool shed on the rocks.

The wool was softer than their own flocks' and more suitable for undergarments, gloves, and scarves. Weavers combined Soay wool with Hirta wool in tweed, which could be bartered for rent or traded to tourists. However, as the human population declined, the final inhabitants left for the mainland, taking their livestock with them. Then, the new owner, the Earl of Dumfries, populated Hirta with 107 Soay sheep from the neighboring islet. By 1952, the population on Hirta had grown to 1,114 and have remained there since. Small numbers were taken

to mainland Britain for parks and zoos, and eventually private enthusiasts. More recently, small flocks were exported to mainland Europe and North America.

#### ECOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Archaeological evidence of Soay sheep's long residence of the islet in a form only shaped by the natural environment, gives historians a living link to our Neolithic past, demonstrating how far our ancestors had progressed in the domestication of sheep.

In addition, ecological and genetic



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## SOAY SHEEP PROFILE

**Origin:** Scotland

**Population:** endangered; 700-2,000 in Scotland, approx. 600 registered in North America in 2009.

**Purpose:** conservation, meat, wool

**Adult weight M/F:** 80/50 lb., slow-growing

**Lambing average:** 0.8–1.5 per year, born April/May

**Wool yield:** 3–5 lb. per year, 2–6 in., soft to kempy, 44–50 microns

**Appearance:** brown or tan with pale belly and markings, some self-colored brown or tan

**Horns:** 2 both sexes

**Temperament:** shy but tamable, curious, active, independent, good mothers

**Adaptability:** cold-hardy, resistant to disease and foot rot, parasite-tolerant, thrifty browsers, self-sufficient

**Needs:** extensive or rotated pasture, grass hay, water, shelter from rain and sun, good fencing (4 ft with 2x4 in. mesh)

studies on Hirta since 1959 have tracked their population dynamics, interaction with the environment, and evolution. The sheep show an unusual pattern of population boom and crash so that numbers fluctuate between 700 and 2,000 head. All adult females conceive, but the timing of storms can cause huge losses, particularly of rams and lambs during bad winters. Climate warming has resulted in smaller average body size, as more of the smaller animals are getting through the winter. Genetic studies have gained a greater understanding of the survival of recessive genes in a population. Most Soay sheep are horned, although some have smaller deformed horns (scurs) and some ewes are polled. As mates with large horns are preferred by females, how do recessive genes that cause scurring get perpetuated? It appears that those same genes have health benefits, giving longevity, so more chances to mate. Rams that carry both genes have the best of both worlds — long life and sexual attractiveness — so the gene gets passed on.

## SOAY IN AMERICA

The first Soay lineage imported to Canada in 1974 was mainly lost due to crossbreeding. A further import in 1990 of two males and four females remained isolated for an immunology study just outside Montreal. The flock was maintained for 10 years although no longer needed for research, with only one outside ram brought in. Enthusiasts from Oregon bought three rams and two females in 1998–9 and registered the purebreds with their lambs in the British registry. These were the foundation of an American conservation effort of enthusiasts dedicated to saving the breed. In 2000, as the Montreal flock was sold, 19 more came to Oregon. Then in 2007, semen was imported from the UK. These pure descendants of the original Soay sheep are termed “British Soay,” whereas composite forms make up “North American Soay,” which are generally larger. 🌱

*Sources: Rare Breeds Survival Trust, St. Kilda Soay Sheep Project, Southern Oregon Soay Sheep Farms, Saltmarsh Ranch Soay Sheep*

**TAMSIN COOPER** is a smallholder and goat keeper in France. She follows the latest research on behavior, welfare and sustainability, and mentors on animal welfare courses.

Find her at [goatwriter.com](http://goatwriter.com).

# How Big Do Goats Get?

BY THERESA MILLER



Taylor Reynolds, Lisa Peterson, and Brian Hernandez of High Desert Grange, with Boer buck Fathead, at the Nevada Junior Livestock Show.

**H**OW BIG DO GOATS GET and what is the largest goat breed? Ogden Nash once wrote, "The trouble with a kitten is that eventually, it becomes a cat." The same holds true for goats. Baby goats, those adorable bundles of fuzzy playfulness, can steal your heart. But what happens when that cute bouncy kid grows up?

It depends. Goat sizes vary quite a bit. The smallest adult goat I found is Ivy, a Pygora in Rice Lake, Minnesota. At 14 months she stood 14.5 inches at the withers and weighed just 16 pounds. The 2018 All Pakistan Heavy-Weight Champion, an Amritsari named Mastana, weighed over 520 pounds and qualifies as the largest goat breed. Your goat will fall somewhere between these two extremes. Let's take a look at some breeds that can top 200 pounds or 36" (three feet) tall.

## BOER

This big boy of the meat goats is recognizable by its distinctive white body and red head, although they can sometimes be fully white or red or paint. Because of their size, docility, fast growth rate, and high fertility, these goats quickly gained popularity after their introduction to the U.S. in 1993. According to Kim Holt of Holt Meat Goats, kids average eight pounds at birth, then grow very quickly, given good nutrition, a good mom, and a little creep feed to get them started.

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**Left:** SH BabyFace Nelson, a full-blood South African Savanna goat owned by Mike and Allison Rosauer of Three Oaks Goats in Spurper, Texas.

**Right:** Kiko taken by Dr. Schoenian. ©Susan Schoenian, Sheep and Goat Specialist, University of Maryland Extension, sheepandgoat.com



How big do Boer goats get? Mature does can weigh between 190-230 pounds, and for mature bucks, Boer goat weight can weigh between 200–340 pounds and are considered the largest goat breed raised in the U.S.

### KALAHARI RED

The Kalahari Red, sometimes just called Kalahari, is another meat goat of South African origin. The name comes from the Kalahari Desert, which spans the borders of Botswana, South Africa, and Namibia. The most distinct visual characteristic of this goat breed is its red color. How big do Kalahari Red goats get? Does range from 145-165 pounds, and bucks 230-254 pounds.

### SAVANNA

Some people think of Savannas as “white Boer goats.” This is not true. Although they come from the same continent, they have different genetic backgrounds. The North American Savanna Association states a fully pigmented white goat is the ideal. How big do Savanna goats get? Does range from 125-195 pounds, and bucks 200-250 pounds.

### SAANEN

The largest goat breed of the Swiss dairy goats, Saanens originated in the Saanen Valley of Switzerland.

They first came to the US in the early 1900s. Saanen goats are white or cream in color with medium-sized erect ears and a straight or dished face. Around the world, they are considered the heaviest milk producers, producing one to three gallons per day during a lactation period of about 305 days. How big do Saanen goats get? The American Goat Society sets a minimum size for this breed at 135 pounds and 30” for does and 160 pounds and 32” for bucks. That’s a minimum. Dwite Sharp of Paradise Ranch Packgoats regularly breeds Saanens that reach 290 pounds and 40”.

### ALPINE

The Alpine goat, or French Alpine, was developed in the Swiss Alps. They were imported to the US via France in 1922. Displaying erect ears and medium to short hair, Alpines come in all colors and combinations. They are known for their good milking capacity and are one of the more popular pack goat breeds. How big do Alpine goats get? Mature does usually weigh 135-155 pounds and stand 30”-35” at the withers. Bucks usually weigh 176-220 pounds and stand 32”-40” at the withers.

### KIKO

This meat goat, named for the Maori word for flesh or meat, was developed in New Zealand in the



1980s. Kiko goats are bred for hardiness, weight, conformation, and productivity, and have compact, muscular bodies. How big do Kiko goats get? Does weigh 100-180 pounds and stand 28" at the withers. Bucks weigh 250-300 pounds and stand 30.5" at the withers.

### MIXES AND MEDIUMS

Dwite Sharp, of Paradise Ranch Packgoats, says his biggest goats are Sabors, which are a mix of Saanen and Boer. "We've had some of those in that actually get up over 300 pounds and the tallest one we've had stood 41 inches at the withers." Other large hybrids include Boki (Boer-Kiko), Sako (Savanna-Kiko), Sabo (Savanna-Boer), and Tex-Master (Myotonic and Boer).

Although the official weight ranges of medium-sized breeds like the Anglo-Nubian, LaMancha, and Toggenburg goats are under



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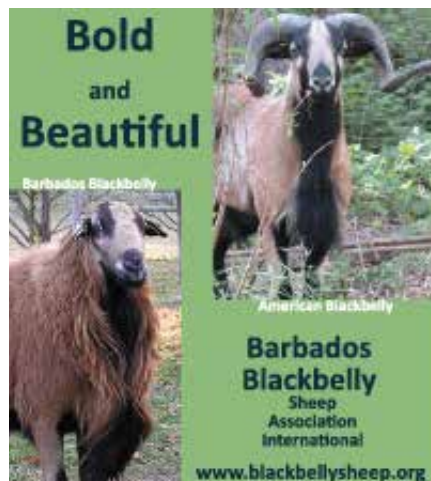
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200 pounds, some goats obviously don't read the guidelines.

Dwite has bred some fairly good-sized Toggenburgs and Nubians, getting them over 200 pounds. Despite the size, he isn't a fan of Nubians as pack goats. "They're not very athletic," he said. "You have a hard time getting them to jump over things or jump up on something. That's something we haven't been able to fix."

Goat Journal editor, Marissa Ames, owns several breeds of goats. Although she has never weighed them, she says her Toggenburg doe "is definitely my biggest and her babies are huge." She added that she had some LaMancha bucks for a while, "And those guys were monsters."

**SPACE REQUIREMENTS**

Now that we've answered how big goats get and the largest goat

breeds, the next question is how much space do goats need? The answer is, again, it depends. The general rule is two to 10 goats per acre of pastureland. That's quite a spread. Bigger goats, dry pasture, less leafy or brushy growth, and higher nutritional needs, such as lactating nannies, all bring you closer to the smaller number. If you plan to add goats to cattle, you can add one to two goats per head of cattle.

For people with goats, who don't have access to pastureland, it is okay to keep them in pens and provide them with hay, grain, and water. These goats need a bare minimum of 250 square feet of dry lot per goat. Goats that get exercised regularly, like pack goats and brush goats, need less space than those that stay in the pens or pasture full time.

Whether you use pasture or pen, if you live in a climate with cold winters, you also need indoor space for does and kids. The rule of thumb here is 20 square feet per doe.

**START SMALL**

Think of not only how big goats get but how quickly herds can grow. Goats reach sexual maturity quickly and have relatively short gestations. Your herd could double in as little as a year. Just don't start too small. Remember that goats are social animals, so you need at least two.

**THERESA MILLER** lives in a small ranching town in Idaho, where she and her husband own and operate a small engine repair shop called Cycles, Sleds & Saws. Her spare time is divided between reading, writing, cooking, gardening, picking huckleberries and learning new things. Her favorite hobby is talking to people about things they are passionate about.

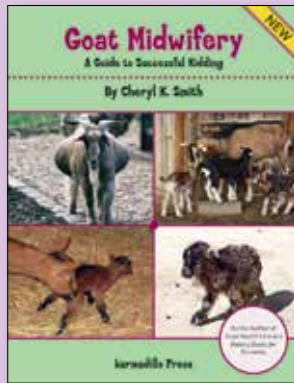
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## GOAT LABOR SIGNS

Knowing goat labor signs also alerts you to be available in case the doe should need your help. Unfortunately, not all pregnant goats show signs that kidding is imminent.

### 1. The doe bags up.

A doe may bag up a month or mere days before, or not until after they give birth. In most cases, when the udder looks tight and shiny, and teats point slightly to the sides, kids appear within a day.

### 2. The pelvic ligaments loosen.

Place your palm above the doe's tail, fingers pointed toward the rear, and press down with your thumb and forefinger while moving your hand toward the base of the tail. You will feel thin, stiff ropey ligaments on each side. When the doe nears kidding time, the ligaments loosen, and the tail looks gimpy. When you can't feel the ligaments at all, expect kids within the day.

### 3. The doe changes shape.

As kids move into position, the doe's belly sags. As the kids drop, the doe's sides hollow and her hip bones stick out. As the area above the back legs sinks, the spine appears more prominent.

### 4. The doe discharges mucus.

Note that some does will drip cloudy mucus as much as a month prior to kidding. Watch for thick white or yellowish mucus discharge that looks like a long, continuous rope.

### 5. The doe seeks solitude.

A doe may wander off into a pasture and appear to stare at the ground. Try to coax her into a private area under cover.

### 6. The doe gets restless.

A doe that's going into labor will pace, turn in circles, paw the ground, stretch, yawn, and sniff at the bedding, and maybe grind her teeth. She may look back behind her and lick or bite at her sides. If you visit, she may lick your face, hands, and arms.

### 7. The doe won't eat.

She may not eat for the last few hours, even up to a day. On the other hand, some does eat right up until they kid, and even grab a bite in the middle of giving birth to twins.

### 8. The doe becomes vocal.

Within a day or so of kidding, some does bleat to their unborn kids. She may bawl with each contraction. As contractions get close together, the doe usually grunts as she pushes. You should see the first kid within about 30 minutes.

### 9. The calendar says so.

Goat gestation is 150 days, although she may kid three days early or five days late. Keep a record of when your does are bred and when they kid.

### 10. The water bag bursts.

When the doe pushes, a water bag may protrude from the vaginal opening, followed by a second bag filled with dark liquid. These contain amniotic fluid and surround and protect the kid(s) until birth. Next you will likely see tips of a kid's front toes, with a tiny nose resting on top. This is the moment you've been waiting for—the beginning of a normal delivery. *Originally written by Gail Damerow in 2016.*





## HOMEMADE FARMER'S RAISIN BREAD

BY SAMUEL FELDMAN

**W**HAT CAN COMPARE TO A FRESH LOAF of raisin bread, right from the oven?" But how do you bake such bread?" I asked. I was at my friends' house on their small farm, tasting a loaf of fresh, home-baked bread. Is there any special recipe? Maybe something traditional? "No, just simple bread," was the answer. But then why can't I find such bread in the city? After several questions, they agreed to give an interview with the recipe. It was a long process for them to bake a new loaf, with me asking questions and tasting at the end. It was impolite of me, but the result was a recipe of pure farmer's country bread, illustrated by both taste and

sight. The recipe is baked the same as it was baked long ago, a simple recipe that tastes better than any other.

Actually, bread is very simple. Real bread consists

of mostly flour and water. All of the other ingredients are optional and can be changed to fit one's taste. Here, raisins and a little honey will be added to sweeten the bread and make the taste similar to cake. You can experiment with different types of ingredients and techniques. For

example, some suggest letting the bread sit for 12 hours in the refrigerator after rising. This increases flavor and texture and develops the air holes that you find in store-bought artisan bread.

Fresh baked bread doesn't have to be fancy. A simple flavorful bread is right at your fingertips.

## Farmer's Raisin Bread

### INGREDIENTS

- 2¼ cups warm water
- 1 package (¼ ounce) or 2 teaspoons yeast
- 3 tablespoons honey
- 3 tablespoons oil or butter
- 6-7 cups flour
- 2 cups washed raisins

### NOW LET'S BAKE!

**1.** In a large bowl, mix boiled and faucet water to achieve a warm temperature. A general rule is that the water should feel a little hot but not cause any unpleasant sensation when checked with a finger. Dissolve the yeast and mix in the honey and oil. Here, sunflower oil is used, but butter also works well. Add several cups of flour until the mixture becomes a creamy consistency.

**2.** Add the raisins, mixing them in the creamy dough with a spoon. Gradually mix in the flour, ½ cup (or one handful) at a time, until the dough becomes firm and it is impossible to continue mixing with the spoon.

**3.** Just before kneading the bread, set the oven to 200 degrees F for about eight minutes with a greased bread tin inside the oven. This prevents sticking and provides a warm place for the bread to rise when it is ready.

**4.** Place the dough from the bowl on a lightly floured surface. It is best to wet your hands and

afterward, dust them with flour. This makes sure that the dough won't stick to your hands. Dust the dough with flour and gradually start kneading. A good technique is to lift and fold one end of the dough and plunge it down into the center. Rotate the dough and repeat the process. Knead the dough until it stops sticking and is smooth and elastic. This can take from eight to 10 minutes. Though, the more you knead, the better.

**TIP:**  
For a more crusted texture and better rising, some suggest adding a pan filled with one cup of boiled water at the lowest rack when baking.

**5.** By this time, the oven will be ready and the greased tin will be hot. Turn the oven off. Shape the dough to form a loaf and place it in the heated oven to rise. Let the bread rise until it has doubled in size. This can take from 30 to 45 minutes, depending on the yeast.

**6.** When the bread has doubled in size, cut several

diagonal slashes on the bread and lightly dust it with flour. This creates a more rustic look and lets the bread evenly rise as it bakes.

**7.** Bake for 30-35 minutes at 375 degrees F, until the crust is golden and the bread sounds hollow when tapped.

**8.** When the bread is ready and the scent of fresh bread fills the kitchen, remove from the oven to wire racks and let cool. Serve with butter, cheese, jam, or just by itself.

Enjoy! 🍷

## FLOUR OPTIONS

### WHITE BREAD FLOUR

Any type of flour can be used for bread baking, though white bread flour rises best.

In this recipe, about six cups white, all-purpose flour is mixed with about one cup whole wheat flour.

### RYE BREAD FLOUR

If you would like to make rye bread, mix two cups rye flour with five cups bread flour. Rye flour by itself does not rise well. When using rye flour, add molasses and cacao powder for the best taste.

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## Delightful Dumplings

BY RITA HEIKENFELD

**H**OW MANY OF YOU HAVE made homemade drop dumplings from scratch? How about rolled dumplings — have you tried making those?

The good news is that both are easy to make, really. I know they may look complicated but, honestly, they're fun and simple enough for kids to make, with guidance. There are a few techniques to follow and once you've mastered those, you've got this. The art of making dumplings!

Dumplings are so good cooked on top of soup or stew or simply dropped into hot broth. The secret? No peeking while the dumplings

cook! It's the steam in the pot that makes them rise so high.

I'm also including a recipe originating from my German mother-in-law for spaetzle. These "dumplings" are a popular item at German and Hungarian restaurants.

I guarantee you'll get "oohs" and "aahs" from those lucky enough to enjoy a batch of homemade dumplings.

### CHICKEN STEW WITH DROP DUMPLINGS

Want a little heat in the stew? Use hot sausage.

#### INGREDIENTS FOR CHICKEN STEW

- ½ stick (4 tablespoons) butter
- ⅓ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon or so garlic, minced (1 nice clove)
- 2 cups chicken broth
- ⅔ cup milk
- 3 cups cooked chicken, coarsely chopped
- ½ pound sausage, cooked, drained, and crumbled (optional but good)
- 10 oz. box frozen peas and carrots, thawed a bit
- Salt and pepper to taste

#### INSTRUCTIONS FOR STEW

- 1.** Melt butter in pot and stir in flour. Whisk over medium heat until it starts to turn a little golden, but don't let brown.
- 2.** Add garlic, broth, and milk. Cook, stirring constantly until slightly thickened, a few minutes.
- 3.** Stir in chicken, sausage, and vegetables. Taste for salt and pepper.
- 4.** Bring to a boil, and then lower to simmer, covered, while you make dumplings. Don't worry if it looks a little thin, the dumplings will thicken the mixture more as they cook.

# Winter's Delight Jam



## Ingredients

- 3 cups whole cranberries
- 1 orange, peeled, seeded, and sections separated
- 2 teaspoons grated orange zest, from the above orange
- 2 cups frozen, slightly thawed, sliced strawberries
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons calcium water
- 2 cups sugar, divided
- 2 teaspoons Pomona's Universal Pectin powder

## Before You Begin

*Prepare calcium water — To do this, combine ½ teaspoon calcium powder (in the small packet in your box of Pomona's pectin) with ½ cup water in a small, clear jar with a lid. Shake well. Calcium water should be stored in the refrigerator for future use.*

## Directions

- 1 Wash jars, lids, and bands. Place jars in canner, fill canner 2/3 full with water, bring to a boil. Turn off heat, cover, and keep jars in hot canner water until ready to use. Place lids in water in a small sauce pan; cover and heat to a low boil. Turn off heat and keep lids in hot water until ready to use.
- 2 Rinse cranberries and combine cranberries and orange sections in a food processor. Pulse until coarsely chopped.
- 3 Add strawberries, orange zest, cloves, and cinnamon. Process until finely chopped, but not pureed.
- 4 Put processed fruit mixture into sauce pan.
- 5 Cook mixture for 2 minutes over low heat, stirring constantly.
- 6 Add calcium water, and mix well.
- 7 Measure 1 cup sugar into a bowl. Thoroughly mix pectin powder into sugar. Set aside.
- 8 Bring fruit mixture to a full boil. Add pectin-sugar mixture, stirring vigorously for 1 to 2 minutes to dissolve the pectin.
- 9 Add remaining 1 cup sugar once pectin is dissolved. Stir well and return to a boil. Once the jam returns to a full boil, remove it from the heat. Skim off any foam.
- 10 Fill hot jars to ¼" of top. Wipe rims clean. Screw on 2-piece lids. Put filled jars in boiling water to cover. Boil 10 minutes (add 1 minute more for every 1,000 ft. above sea level). Remove from water. Let jars cool. Check seals; lids should be sucked down. Eat within 1 year. Lasts 3 weeks once opened.



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The secret to perfect dumplings? No peeking while the dumplings cook! It's the steam in the pot that makes them rise so high.



### INGREDIENTS FOR DUMPLINGS

Depending upon how wide the pan is, you may not fit all dumplings on top of the chicken. I have a second, smaller pan simmering with broth and that's how I cook extra dumplings. Or just cut the recipe in half.

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- ¼ to ½ teaspoon salt
- Fresh chopped parsley or a bit of dried parsley (optional)
- Pepper to taste — a couple of dashes
- 1 egg, beaten slightly
- ½ cup milk

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR DUMPLINGS

- 1.** Whisk flour, baking powder, salt, and pepper. Add parsley. Make a well in center. Whisk egg and milk together. Pour into well and mix with a fork. Dough will look shaggy and very sticky. Don't over mix.
- 2.** Use a small ice cream scoop or tablespoon sprayed with cooking spray to drop dumplings carefully on top of simmering chicken, leaving some space in between for expansion. Put lid on. No peeking!
- 3.** Simmer 12-15 minutes, or until largest dumpling is done: cut in half to test. Dumplings expand to double. Makes about 10-12.

**Tip:** For a richer dumpling, stir in 3 tablespoons butter into the milk and heat until butter melts.

**Tip from Rita's kitchen:** Baking powder — not sure if it still has leavening power? Put a bit in warm water — it should fizz up quickly if it's still good.

### ROLLED DUMPLINGS

#### INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ⅓ cup shortening
- ½ cup milk or a little more if needed to make a stiff dough

#### INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Whisk flour, baking powder, and salt together. Cut in shortening with a fork. Make a well in the center and pour in milk. Mix together to make a stiff dough.
- 2.** On a lightly floured surface, pat dough with floured hands to flatten it out. Roll out to about ⅛" thick. If necessary, sprinkle the top of the dough with very little flour to keep from sticking to the rolling pin.
- 3.** Cut into small squares or strips.
- 4.** Drop into gently boiling soup, stew, or broth. Put lid on and don't peek.
- 5.** Dumplings should cook in about 10 minutes. They will puff up almost double.

## RITA'S SPAETZLE

Can be doubled if you like. My mother-in-law patted hers out on a cutting board, then scraped the dough off in pieces with a knife, letting the pieces drop into the gently boiling broth, soup, gravy, or stew.


### INGREDIENTS

1 large egg, beaten lightly  
1/3 cup milk  
2 tablespoons melted butter  
1 cup all-purpose flour  
Salt and pepper to taste  
Boiling broth, soup, gravy, or stew (I used a quart of chicken broth)

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Whisk eggs and milk together and stir in butter.
2. Place flour, salt, and pepper in a separate bowl and make a well in center.
3. Pour in milk mixture and whisk until smooth. Batter will be wet.
4. Two ways to make spaetzle by hand:
5. Sprinkle a small cutting board with flour.
6. Dump dough on and smooth to about 1/4". Sprinkle with a little flour.
7. Take a knife and cut/scrape through dough into little pieces, dropping them into broth. You'll get the hang of it after a few tries.
8. Or scoop up dough in a tablespoon and then take a knife or another spoon and drop little pieces of dough into broth.
9. When they rise to the top, they're cooked.

### TO SERVE:

Scoop out and serve as a side dish like noodles, or serve as a soup in the broth. You can also add cooked chicken and/or fresh chopped greens to the broth. As a soup, it's nourishing and filling for someone who feels a bit under the weather. I like to sprinkle fresh parsley on top. You can also fry the cooked spaetzle in butter. 

**RITA HEIKENFELD** is a certified modern herbalist, culinary educator, author, and national media personality. Most important, she is a wife, mom, and grandma. Rita lives on a little patch of heaven overlooking the East Fork River in Clermont County, Ohio. She is a former adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati, where she developed a comprehensive herbal course.  
abouteating.com column: rita@communitypress.com



**Top:** Spaetzle dough on the cutting board.

**Middle:** Spaetzle cooking in a broth.

**Bottom:** Finished spaetzle in broth is ready to eat!



# Hot and Cold Process Lard Soap Recipes

BY MELANIE TEEGARDEN



**A** LARD SOAP RECIPE, in addition to containing a significant quantity of lard, should also contain complementary fats to bolster bubbles and skin conditioning properties. In this article, we explore a lard soap recipe, hot processed to quickly yield a hard bar of soap. Another lard soap recipe uses the heat transfer cold process method, producing a creamy, smooth soap bar. When you have a lard soap recipe, hot processing creates a bar of soap that is completely saponified and ready to use, if necessary, as soon as it is cooled and cut. Of course, any bar of soap will still benefit from a four- to six-week curing period, which will make the most of a lard soap recipe's creamy, stable lathering qualities and moisturizing benefits to the skin. The fat known as lard includes a high percentage of saturated fats, similar to the sebum we produce in human skin.

When a soap is superfatted with a percentage of lard, the recipe will be gentle and moisturizing to the skin.

What other oils and fats go well with lard? Coconut oil is a useful addition to increase the size of the

Coconut oil is a useful addition to increase the size of the bubbles in the lather.

bubbles in the lather. If you prefer a very bubbly lather, a bit of coconut oil will help. While lard can be used at up to 100% of a soap recipe's oils, it is better at around 60-80%, combined with conditioning and bar-hardening oils such as olive oil, shea butter, or castor oil. Lard provides so many good qualities to a bar of soap on its own that you are virtually unlimited when it comes to which oils you can combine. Lard soap provides a good opportunity to experiment with new

oils in a recipe or to clean out your cupboard of bits and pieces of various oils. Lard has properties in soap that are similar to palm and other solid nut butters such as cocoa butter and shea butter. As such, there

is really no reason to use these fats in a lard soap bar unless you need to use them up — because of the lard content, the bar will already be hard, with a stable, creamy, moisturizing lather.

## Heat Transfer Cold Process Lard Soap Recipe

### Ingredients

- 12 oz. lard
- 8 oz. coconut oil
- 12 oz. pure olive oil
- 4.45 oz. sodium hydroxide
- 10 oz. water

### Directions

1. Weigh the sodium hydroxide into a lye-safe container and set aside. Weigh the water into a heat-safe and lye-safe container. Wear protective goggles. Gloves and a face mask are also recommended, but good ventilation is vital. In a well-ventilated area, pour the lye into the water slowly and stir to dissolve. Set aside.
2. Weigh the lard and coconut oils, then place the hard oils into a large heat-safe and lye-safe bowl. Pour the hot lye water over the hard oils and stir for a few minutes until the fats are completely melted.
3. Weigh the olive oil into a separate container, then pour into the fats/lye mixture and stir well. Using a stick blender, blend until thin to medium trace is reached.
4. Add any fragrance or essential oils according to manufacturer recommendation and blend thoroughly. Add colors, if using. Pour into mold(s) and insulate, if desired. Soap should be ready to unmold in 24-48 hours.
5. Slice after unmolding. Allow to cure in a dark, dry location with good ventilation for four to six weeks before using, for best results.



## Hot Process Lard Soap Recipe

### Ingredients

- 14 oz. lard — set aside 1 oz. to add at end of cooking as superfat
- 4 oz. coconut oil
- 8 oz. olive oil
- 6 oz. sunflower oil
- 4.25 oz. sodium hydroxide
- 12 oz. water

### Directions

1. Set crockpot on low heat. Weigh oils into a separate container one

- at a time before pouring each into the crockpot. Set aside one ounce of the lard to use as superfat after the cook. For the rest of the oils, cover and allow to melt completely.
2. Meanwhile, weigh lye into a lye-safe container. Set aside. Weigh water into a heat-safe and lye-safe container. Slowly pour the lye into the water, stirring with a nonreactive spoon to dissolve completely. Once lye is dissolved, pour hot lye water into crockpot with melted oils. Using a stick



Hot processed soap naturally has a more rough and “handmade” appearance than cold processed soap.



blender, blend until a thick trace is reached. Place entire crockpot into sink. This will contain any overflow in the event that the soap rises while cooking.

3. Cover crockpot and leave soap to process on low heat, stirring occasionally, until it has reached a stage where it is translucent and resembles homogenous, slightly wet mashed potatoes. This will take between one and two hours to complete, and should be checked on often to prevent overflowing.

4. At this hot process soap stage, you can begin checking for full saponification using pH testing strips, if desired. However, it is not necessary to check, as any remaining trace of lye in the soap will be finished reacting by the time the soap has cooled and hardened in the mold.

5. Once the soap is done, it will resemble dry mashed potatoes. When it begins sticking to the sides of the container, that is an indication that it is ready to pour. Remove from heat and set aside for 10 minutes to cool slightly. Add the one ounce of set-aside lard at this time, and stir to melt and incorporate thoroughly. This will be your superfat.

6. Weigh essential or cosmetic-grade fragrance oils according to the manufacturer’s recommended

usage rates for soap. It is important to note that in general, you will need about HALF as much essential or fragrance oil for hot processed soap as what you would use for cold processed soap, so measure your oils on the lower end of the recommendation.

7. After allowing the soap to cool slightly, add essential or fragrance oils and combine thoroughly. Add colorants, if using, at this time. A simple in-the-pot swirl is the most common method used to color hot processed soap.

8. Pour or spoon the soap into molds, tapping molds frequently on the tabletop to remove as many air bubbles as possible.

**Note:** Hot processed soap naturally has a more rough and “handmade” appearance than cold processed soap. Many find this style of soap even more beautiful. Intricate molds may be better suited to cold processed soap, as the thickness of this recipe will hide small details and impressions.

#### THE BENEFITS OF USING LARD

Using lard in a soap recipe yields a creamy, stable lather. The additional free fats in finished handmade soap make the bar conditioning and cleansing without stripping skin. It also imparts a sheer, microscopic



film of oil on the surface of the skin to prevent that dry, tight feeling often associated with detergent bars. While you can use lard at up to 100% of your total oils, these soaps do benefit from being mixed with oils of different properties to boost their natural goodness. A little coconut oil for bubbles, some castor oil for drawing moisture to the skin, or even a light oil such as sunflower are all perfect to use with lard in soapmaking. 🌿

**MELANIE TEEGARDEN** has been proprietor of Althaea Soaps & Herbals for 15 years. She has run an international website selling bath and body products to individuals and spas since 2006. In addition to her home-based business, Melanie also teaches soapmaking classes in her community of Johnson City, Tennessee, and is the resident expert for Home Soapmaking at [iamcountryside.com](http://iamcountryside.com).

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# Hack Your Sleep Cycles for Better Rest

BY JENNIFER VANBENSCHOTEN



Photo by Ellieelien

**A**S I WRITE THIS, MY husband is coming home from an 18-hour shift at work. Thankfully, he doesn't have to do this kind of thing very often, but it's enough to mess up his sleep for a few days. He's not alone: it's estimated that one in three adults in the U.S. have chronic sleep problems, ranging from insomnia to not being able to get good quality sleep on a regular basis. And in case you didn't know, getting good quality

sleep every night can affect many areas of our health including our mood, our ability to lose weight or maintain weight, our concentration, and our immune system.

One of my mentors and teachers reminds me all the time that rest is a sacred time. We're so used to being busy and having to-do lists that are a mile long, we sometimes feel guilty about taking the time to rest, and to rest well. Getting a good night's sleep can be an act of peaceful rebellion in a world

where we continue to blur the line between work life and home life.

Seasonal sleep problems can happen, too. When the nights get longer and the days get shorter, our sleep cycles can become disrupted. In Ayurvedic medicine, this is thought to be because of an abundance of Vata: dry, cold, fast-moving energy. You may want to fall asleep earlier when it starts to get dark earlier, but then find yourself awake in the middle of the night for several hours.

If you're someone who needs some ideas for hacking your sleep cycles, here are some tried-and-true home remedies and lifestyle suggestions for getting a good night's sleep.

Create and maintain a bedtime routine. When my son was an infant, we created a soothing, regular bedtime routine to help him fall asleep quickly. As adults, we need that same nurturing in a bedtime routine. Give yourself time at the end of the day to unwind, change into your pajamas, or do whatever it is you need to do to signal to your body that it's time to rest.

Some ideas for your bedtime routine might include changing your clothes, brushing your teeth, taking a short warm (not hot) shower, shutting off all the lights and electronics, and listening to calming music. Include whatever it is that makes you feel nourished and relaxed. Make your bedtime routine long enough so that your body knows it's time to start switching into sleep mode, but not so long that you feel exhausted just thinking about everything that you have to do before bed!

Creating a relaxing space for sleep can go a long way to helping you hack your sleep. Remove all electronics from your bedroom, including the television, computer, tablet, or cell

phone. Don't even have a digital clock next to your bed — all of these things can create light disturbances that make it difficult to fall asleep or stay asleep, especially if you wake up in the middle of the night.

Keeping your room as dark as you can, will help your body naturally produce the melatonin that you need to sleep well at night. If at all possible, keep your electronics elsewhere in your home. If you absolutely must have a computer or other electronics in your room, get creative and put up a screen or some kind of divider so that you can't see it from your bed.

In addition, shut off all electronics, computers, televisions, and sources of blue light at least an hour before you start your bedtime routine. These types of devices have been shown to inhibit the production of melatonin that can make it difficult for you to sleep at night.

Get yourself as relaxed as possible before bedtime. Meditation before bedtime isn't always a great idea — some people are energized by the practice. Instead, try some of these ideas:

- Take a 20-minute warm (not hot) shower about an hour before you want to be asleep as part of your bedtime routine.
- Get some good quality sesame oil for a warm all-over self-massage before you take your shower. (Be mindful of your feet before you get into the shower to avoid slipping in the water.)
- Listen to calming music or gentle ambient sounds like rain.
- Take a short walk in nature after dinner.

Set a schedule and stick to it. According to your body clock, it's ideal to be asleep by 10:00 p.m. This means starting your bedtime routine around 9:00 p.m. or 9:30 p.m. Both traditional Chinese medicine and Ayurveda recommend being asleep before 10:00 p.m. because, after that, the energy of the night shifts and makes it harder for you to actually fall asleep. If you routinely go to bed at 11:00 p.m. or later, it's more difficult for your body to relax enough so that you fall asleep and stay asleep.

It might take a few weeks for your body to adjust to going to bed at an earlier hour, but the payoff is worth it.

Your evening meal matters. While you're asleep,

there are still many body processes happening, including digestion. Avoid eating a large, heavy meal in the evening. Preparing and eating a warm, well-cooked meal of mostly vegetables (with small amounts of easily digestible animal protein, if you like) can help your body relax enough to fall asleep easily. Think about warm vegetable stews and vegetarian soups for dinner as a way to provide you with

nourishing food that won't make your digestive system work too hard overnight.

Warm milk before bedtime helps! It might sound like an old wives' tale, but those kinds of folk remedies very often have real value. In this case, warming up  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup of organic or raw milk and adding a pinch (no more than  $\frac{1}{8}$  tsp) of ground nutmeg about an hour before bedtime can help relax your body and mind and ease you into sleep. (Note: if you have a seizure disorder or take medication for seizures, don't use nutmeg for this purpose.)

Last but not least, you can use aromatherapy to help you get better rest at night. The two best oils that I've found for inducing relaxation and sleep are lavender and bergamot, and they work even better when you combine them. You can either add a few drops of these to the wall of your shower or shower curtain during your bedtime routine, put them in your favorite diffuser, or put a few of them on a washcloth and tuck it under your pillow.

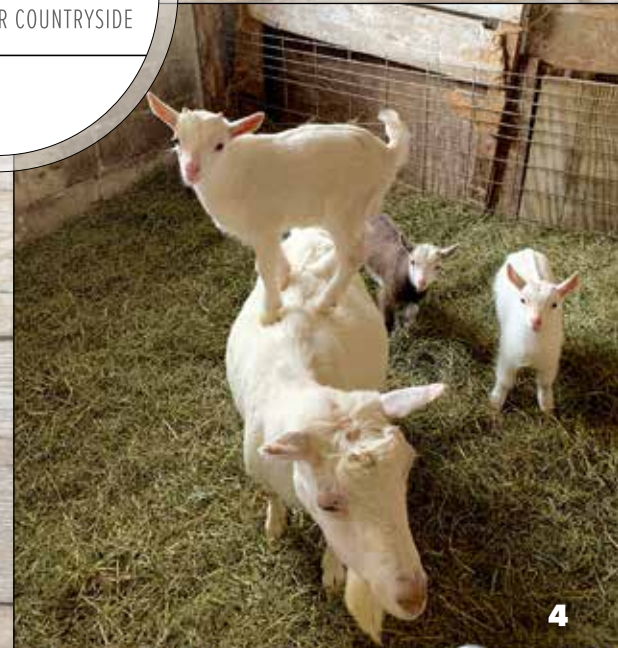
While your body is adjusting to these new sleep routines, practice other relaxation techniques during the day including meditation (usually best to do right after you wake up in the morning), gentle exercise like walking, and be mindful of your intake of caffeine and other stimulants during the day. As always, if you find that your sleep disruptions are causing you physical distress, please consult your family physician to be evaluated and rule out any serious underlying issues that might be causing problems. Rest well! 🌿

Keeping your room as dark as you can, will help your body naturally produce the melatonin that you need to sleep well at night.

In the heart of the Adirondack mountains, **JENNIFER VANBENSCHOTEN** raises chickens for eggs, keeps bees for honey, and grows her own food. Jennifer enjoys scratch cooking, writing creative nonfiction and poetry, teaching yoga, and creating handmade beaded jewelry.

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- 1** Two kids enjoying the Wyoming snow and sun. 📍 **Alpenthal's Dairy Goats — Tanja Miller, Sundance, Wyoming**
- 2** Our farm dog, Shiloh, snuggling a baby Ameraucana chick. 📍 **Tami Mullin @rustymoosefarm**
- 3** Love keeps you warm all winter! Thomas and Boe kitty. 📍 **Hannah McClure @muddyoakhenhouse**
- 4** Tired of homeschooling the kids. 📍 **Nancy Ellison, Minnesota**



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## The Good Living Guide to Keeping Sheep and Other Fiber Animals

BY JANET GARMAN

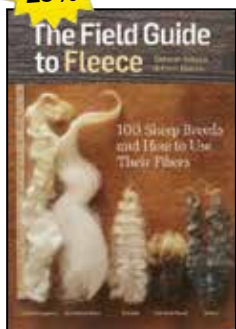


A comprehensive and inspiring guide to small-scale fiber farming and wool crafting. Fiber crafts — such as knitting, weaving, and crocheting — continue to surge in popularity. Readers will learn the basics of properly raising sheep, goats, llamas, alpacas, and rabbits, with tips on selecting animals, feeding, housing, breeding, and healthcare. From there, instructions are provided for shearing, sorting, skirting, washing, picking, carding, combing, and spinning the wool. Enthusiasts will also find recipes and instructions for natural, plant-based dyes and advice for selling your finished yarn. 176 pages. **\$14.99**

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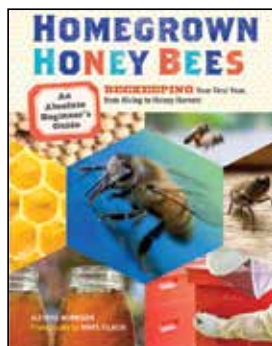


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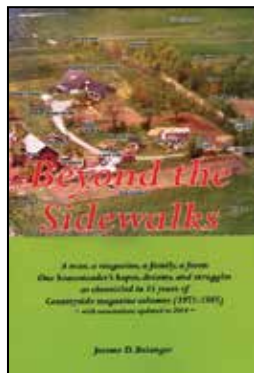
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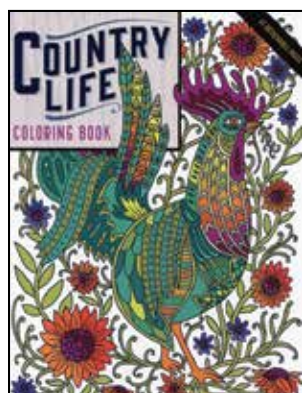
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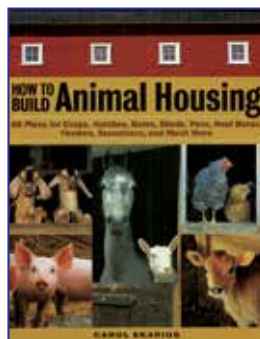


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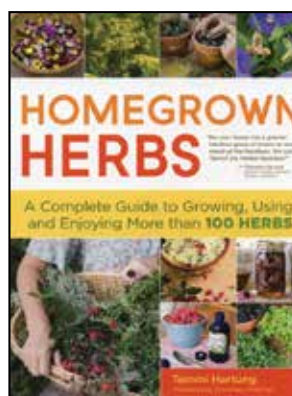
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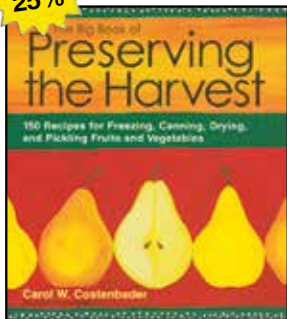


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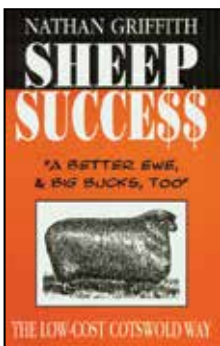
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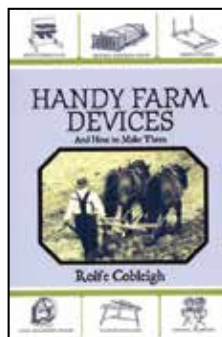
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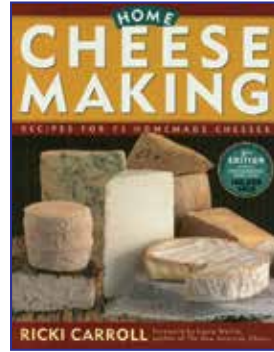


With probiotic-rich foods increasingly recognized as essential to gut health, yogurt and kefir are gaining popularity as a source of protein and beneficial bacteria. Cheesemaker and small-scale dairy producer Gianacelis Caldwell opens the door for fermentation enthusiasts and dairy devotees to make and use yogurt and kefir in the home kitchen. She explores the many culture choices and techniques for working with cow, goat, sheep, water buffalo, and even some plant milks. 224 pages. **\$19.95**

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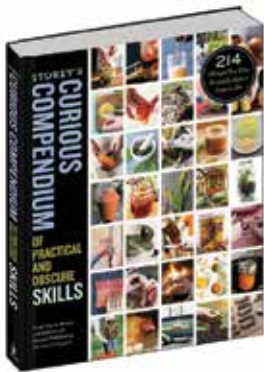
## Home Cheese Making

By RICKI CARROLL



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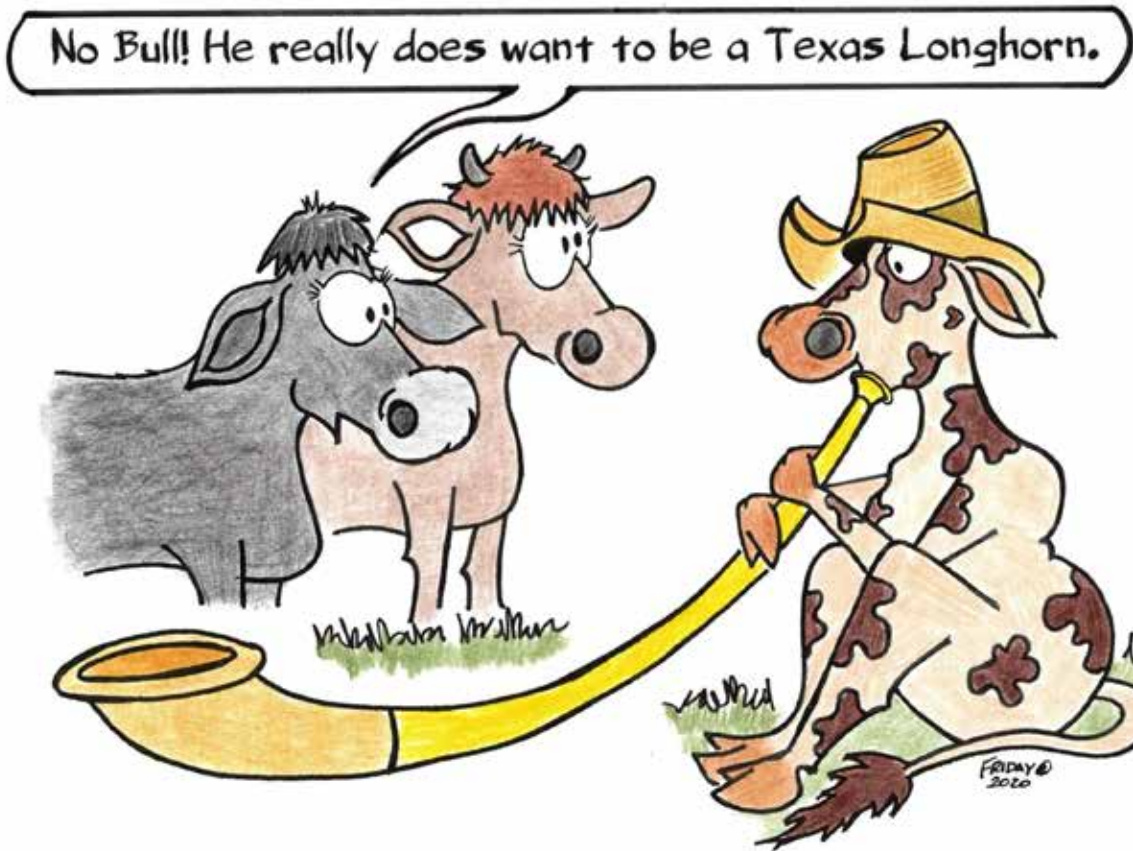
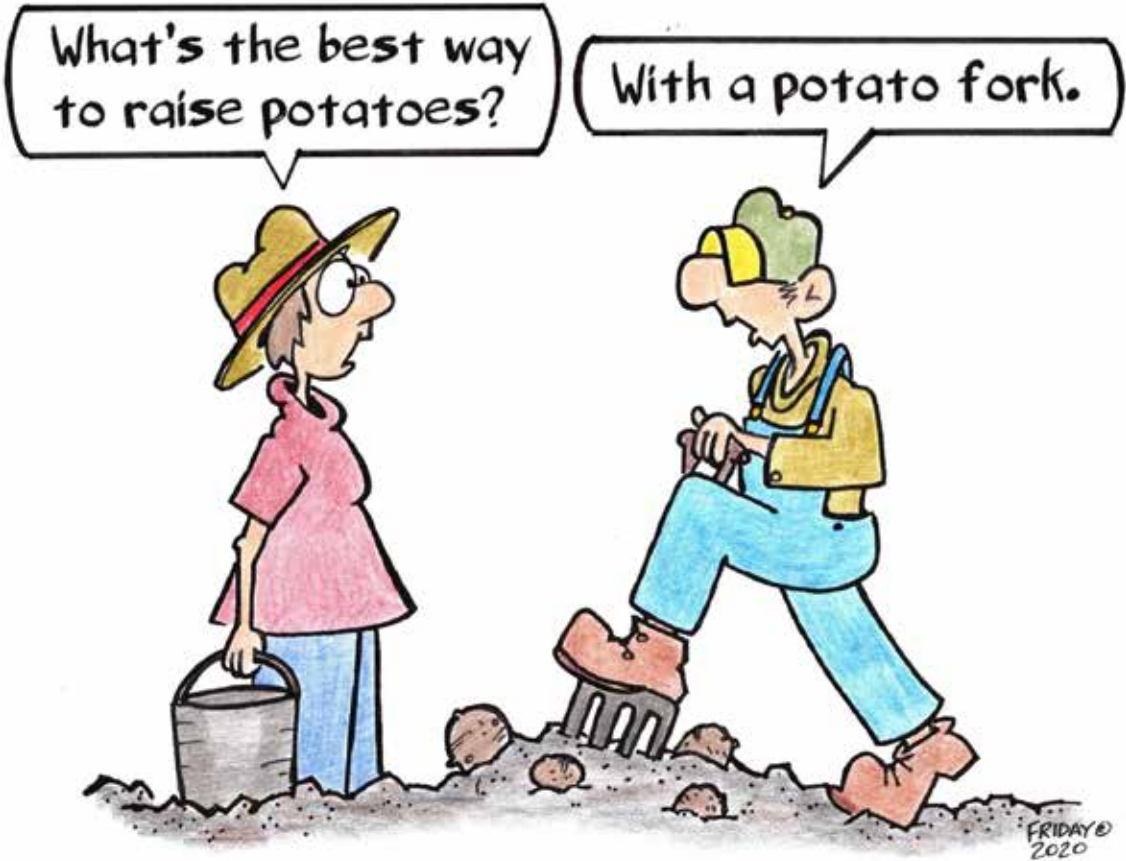
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The winner will be chosen randomly from all the submissions returned by February 1, 2021.  
The winner of the September/October Reader Contest was Ferne Founds, New Hampshire.  
Congratulations to you, Ferne! Enjoy your new beanie.



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# Poor Will's COUNTRYSIDE almanack

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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## january

					Check house-plants, and especially plants that were brought inside before frost, for spider mites, whiteflies, scale, and aphids. <b>New Year's Day 1</b>	Make sure your bees have enough ventilation to prevent condensation within the hive. Also, make sure they have enough honey for the winter. <b>2</b>
Plan ahead for the next two years. Breeding ideas and creative crop decisions can often use as much lead-time as you can give them. <b>3</b>	Explore marketing options for Lunar New Year, February 12 – 17. This year, this feast coincides with the Mardi Gras celebrations (February 16). <b>4</b>	The dark moon is right for vaccinating animals due to give birth in February. Trim their feet and clip udders and hind-quarters before birthing. <b>5</b>	Epiphany (Three-Kings Day) is usually celebrated on or near January 6. Milk-fed lambs and kids are often in demand for this market. <b>6</b>	Weigh your livestock (newborns and mothers) at birth, and at least every 30 days thereafter in order to assess and deal with health issues. <b>7</b>	Heavy winter lice infestations can decrease weight gains dramatically and they especially threaten the health of pregnant animals. <b>8</b>	Today's lunar perigee and new moon on January 13 create a weather window that lets in some of the cruellest weather of the winter. <b>9</b>
The major lambing and kidding season now starts: more lambs and kids are born in the next eight weeks than in any other months. <b>10</b>	Today is Plough Monday, a traditional day to begin the farm and garden year. Explore the "Hothouse Market" for lambs and kids now. <b>11</b>	Most lamb and kid growth occurs in the last weeks of pregnancy. Provide your ewes and does special feed and care during this time. <b>12</b>	The Snow Flea Moon is new today. Seed broccoli, cabbage, and kale in flats, providing plenty of warmth and overhead light. <b>13</b>	Prepare landscaping, garden, and field maps, including plans for double cropping, intercropping, and companion planting. <b>14</b>	Provide fresh, warm water for your chickens daily, especially during the coldest weather. <b>15</b>	Experiment with heated water to encourage hydration for your horses as well as for other livestock. <b>16</b>
Lent begins on February 17, and pre-Lenten parties often create demand for lambs and kids for cook-outs throughout the month ahead. <b>17</b>	Christmas cacti can be saved and propagated during the warmer months. You can turn one cactus into a lucrative business. <b>18</b>	Get ready for the January thaw. Lunar phase and lunar apogee will combine to provide the best chance of warmth this winter. <b>19</b>	Consider winter supplements for livestock: molasses, slippery elm and willow bark, flaked oats, seaweed, and mashed raw carrots. <b>20</b>	Review your records: animals that gave birth last year after a full moon might do it again. <b>21</b>	Check for unborn babies by placing hands on mother's abdomen, just in front of udder. Push up and release. Keep hands on animal. You may feel a baby bounce. <b>22</b>	Watch for late abortions in weak animals after full moon. Always check teats for milk flow as kids and lambs are born. <b>23</b>
Check your chickens, turkeys, and ducks for mites. Keep coops and pens clean through the winter and use pesticides carefully. <b>24</b>	Plan for self-sufficiency in fish with a small pond. You can plan to dig one when the ground thaws to raise tilapia and catfish. <b>25</b>	Today is the first day of the season of Late Winter. Its thaws accelerate the swelling of buds and the running of sap. <b>26</b>	Tomorrow's full moon, however, while it will encourage sap to flow, will also bring severe weather to the country. <b>27</b>	In spite of the moon, average temperatures in all areas of the U.S. climb one degree, a major statistical move toward spring today. <b>28</b>	The Easter Market (early April and May this year) is a major marketing time for lambs and kids. Explore the Passover Market, too. <b>29</b>	Winter fertilizing provides a little insurance against spring rain delays. The frozen soil of winter also resists compaction from heavy equipment. <b>30</b>

Reserve your spring chicks for March, April, or May so they can gain weight and be ready to lay by late summer. <b>31</b>	<p><b>January 6   Epiphany (Three-Kings Day):</b> Many Christians celebrate this feast with a fine meal and religious services. Epiphany Sunday is January 3 this year; some areas may celebrate the feast on the traditional date, January 6.</p> <p><b>February 12 - 17   Tet (Lunar New Year—the Year of the Ox):</b> The Asian market is often strong throughout the winter, favoring lambs and kids in the 60 to 80-pound live-weight range.</p> <p><b>February 17   Ash Wednesday:</b> Lent Begins</p> <p><b>February 27   Dominican Republic Independence Day:</b> Areas that have a sizeable population of residents from the Dominican Republic may show an increase in sales of lambs and kids that weigh between 20 to 35 pounds.</p>					
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# WINTER AND EARLIEST SPRING OF 2021

BY W. L. FELKER

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	Aconites and snowdrops begin the bulb flowering season in milder years — and now is the time to divide and move them. <b>1</b>	Spray your broad-leaved evergreens with anti-drying agents to prevent winter-kill. <b>2</b>	Spray trees with dormant oil when temperatures are in the upper 30s or 40s. The best chances of those temperatures occur February 15 – 23. <b>3</b>	As the cold grows deeper, provide a little extra hay for your rabbits and extra grain for your sheep and goats. <b>4</b>	Take cuttings to propagate shrubs, trees, and houseplants; they'll do well as the days lengthen. Force bulbs and branches for indoor markets. <b>5</b>	To maximize weight gain in lambs and kids, think about letting them nurse as long as they want. Milk-fed newborns often produce more meat. <b>6</b>
Frost seeding of dormant pastures and lawns may be started this month. Spread seeds and let the freezing/thawing ground plant them. <b>7</b>	Prepare for possible drought by making sure your soil has sufficient potassium and phosphorus. <b>8</b>	Apply fertilizer to trees and shrubs. Also, prepare your container garden for early vegetables and flowers, and check the pH in your lawn. <b>9</b>	Explore the “club market” for lambs, kids, and other animals. Let your local 4-H clubs know what you have available. <b>10</b>	Reserve your guard guinea fowl chicks from breeders. Consider purchasing a guard donkey before the coyotes get hungry. <b>11</b>	Tet (Lunar New Year — the Year of the Ox) begins today and lasts through the 17th. <b>12</b>	Clip, Dip, Strip, and Sip with newborns: Clip the navel to an inch; dip it in iodine; strip the teat so the animal gets a sip of colostrum. <b>13</b>
Be ready for broody hens. Be sure to pick up eggs regularly. To help break broodiness, you can replace eggs with frozen vegetables. <b>14</b>	Regular fecal samples will keep track of wormload. Give herbs to help with birthing; peppermint, thyme, and chamomile. <b>15</b>	Bake your hot-cross buns to sell at today's Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday) celebrations. And plan to sell to the Easter Market. <b>16</b>	Today is Ash Wednesday, the start of Christian Lent. Roman Easter is on April 4. Orthodox Easter is celebrated on May 2. <b>Lent begins 17</b>	If queen bees stop laying eggs after a cold spell, feed your bees pollen substitute until flowers start blooming again. <b>18</b>	Designate lambs and kids to use for the graduation cookout market that develops between April and June. <b>19</b>	To improve the condition of a rundown animal, old-time lore suggests feeding a daily amount of dill, fennel, anise, and celery seeds. <b>20</b>
Plan your victories at the State Fair: blue ribbons are the result of consistent your-round management and training. <b>21</b>	Mares could show signs of estrus (a three-week cycle) as the days grow longer. You may wish to use ultrasonography to detect estrus. <b>22</b>	March 7 is Meatfare Sunday for Orthodox Christians this year. Demand may rise for lambs and kids (and, perhaps, for chickens). <b>23</b>	Prune trees and shrubs just before bud-break during the moon's third or fourth quarter. Don't prune flowering plants. <b>24</b>	The 27th is full moon day. Expect snow and cold. Keep track of animal and family behavior at this time, as well. Full moon madness is common. <b>25</b>	When the first knuckles of rhubarb emerge from the ground, then it's time to plant onion sets and seed cold frames with spinach, radishes, and lettuce. <b>26</b>	Today is Dominican Republic Independence Day. Explore the Hispanic market in urban centers near your location. <b>27</b>
Supplements to ward off abortion in livestock include rose hips, hawthorn berries, raspberry leaves, and hollyhock root. <b>28</b>	<i>february</i>					

There is no season such delight can bring,  
As summer, autumn, winter, and the spring.

*William Browne*

### THE PLANETS

Venus is the Morning Star as 2021 begins, coming up late in Sagittarius, leading Jupiter and Saturn (in Capricorn) across the sunrise sky. Venus moves retrograde during Feb., joining Jupiter and Saturn in Capricorn, creating a triune cluster of Morning Stars. Of the three planets, Venus is always the brightest. Look for all of these major planets close to the rising dark moon on the morning of Feb.10 and 11. Mars continues its residence in Aries as the Evening Star. Look for it close to the moon just after dark on the 18.

### THE SUN

Perihelion, the point at which the Earth and the Sun are closest to one another, occurs on Jan. 2 at 9:00 a.m. The Sun enters the Late Winter sign of Aquarius on Jan. 19, and its declination passes 17 degrees 23 minutes by the 31st, one-quarter of the way to spring equinox. On Feb. 18, the Sun reaches Cross-Quarter Day, the halfway point to equinox, entering Pisces at the same time and initiating the season of Early Spring.

### THE STARS

In the evening sky, Orion now dominates the southeast. Sirius, the Dog Star, is at his heels. The Pleiades are overhead. Perseus follows Androm-

eda and the Great Square into the west. The Big Dipper begins to circle back out of the northeast. When its pointers to the North Star are positioned directly north and south at 9:00 p.m., it will be Deep Spring.

### THE SHOOTING STARS

The Quadrantid meteor shower occurs between Jan. 1 and Jan. 5 and reaches its best (up to 40 meteors in an hour) on January 2 and 3. Look for these meteors in the northern sky, near the North Star.

### METEOROLOGY

Weather history suggests that the cold waves of this period usually cross the Mississippi River on or about Nov. 2, 6, 11, 16, 20, 24, and 28 and Dec. 3, 8, 15, 20, 25, and 29. Snow or rain often occurs prior to the passage of each major front. Lunar perigee on Nov. 14 could strengthen the power of the new moon on Nov. 15. The full moon on Nov. 30 will bring stronger-than-average storms to the U.S. Lunar perigee on Dec. 12, combined with new moon on Dec. 14, will serve up a fierce beginning to the winter months, and full moon on Dec. 29 will intensify the final high-pressure system of the year with considerable precipitation, followed by deep cold. For more weather information, consult *Poor Will's Weather Book*, available on Amazon.

### LUNAR FEEDING PATTERNS FOR PEOPLE AND BEASTS

When the moon is **above** the continental United States, creatures are typically most active. The second-most-active times occur when the moon is **below** the earth.

DATE	ABOVE	BELOW
January 1 – 6	Midnight to Dawn	Afternoons
January 7 – 13	Mornings	Evenings
January 14 – 20	Afternoons	Midnight to Dawn
January 21 – 28	Evenings	Mornings
January 29 – 31	Midnight to Dawn	Afternoons
February 1 – 4	Midnight to Dawn	Afternoons
February 5 – 11	Mornings	Evenings
February 12 – 19	Afternoons	Midnight to Dawn
February 20 – 28	Evenings	Mornings

### PHASES OF THE STELL MOON, THE SNOW FLEA MOON, AND THE GREAT GROUNDHOG MOON

The Stell Moon marks the period of the year during which livestock most frequently seek protection in “stells” or basic shelters. The Snow Flea Moon shines on Deep Winter’s most common insects where snows cover the landscape. Of course, the Great Groundhog Moon presides over Groundhog Day (Feb. 2) and the thaw that often takes place around that day. The “Great” Groundhog is a mythical creature that brings treats to those who believe in him/her.

- January 6** | Last quarter of the Stell Moon: 4:37 a.m.
- January 9** | Lunar Perigee (when the Moon is closest to Earth): 11:00 a.m.
- January 13** | The Snow Flea Moon is new at 12:00 a.m.
- January 20** | Second Quarter: 4:02 p.m.
- January 21** | Lunar Apogee (when the Moon is farthest from Earth): 8:00 a.m.
- January 28** | Full Moon: 2:16 p.m.
- February 3** | Lunar Perigee (when the Moon is closet to Earth): 2:00 p.m.
- February 4** | Last Quarter: 12:37 p.m.
- February 11** | The Great Groundhog Moon is new at 2:06 p.m.
- February 18** | Lunar Apogee (when the Moon is farthest from Earth): 5:00 a.m.
- February 19** | Second Quarter: 1:47 p.m.
- February 27** | Full Moon: 3:17 a.m.

### THE SCKRAMBLER JANUARY/FEBRUARY STATE FLOWERS

Reader Nancy Orrell suggested state flower names would make a good Sckrambler! The following sckrambled words are some of the flowers that the states have chosen.

IISR	IONCARNAT
SEOR	JSSMNEAIE
OIEVLT	LEBU TNNBOE
NYEOP	DRE LOVERC
MACAIEL	DODHORNENORD
PPPOY	OWODOGD
EPAHC BLSS-	UYCAC WOLFRE
MOO	CAILL
ZAAALE	BEGURHSSA
RODDENDLGO	BTTTRRIEOO
YDLA LSPPIER	

A copy of *Poor Will's Almanack for 2021* will be awarded to 3rd, 7th, 24th, and 40th persons who send their correct responses to

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Yellow Springs, OH 45387  
before the answers appear in *Countryside*.

### WINNERS & ANSWERS SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

Poor Will gave prizes of \$5.00 to the 3rd, 11th, 27th, and 68th readers who solved the puzzle. The 3rd correct entry was from M. Makola, MN; the 11th came from Martha Davis, OH; the 27th came from Nancy Orrell, NM. 32 entries were received.

TEG TIF/GET FIT	TEG FELS-PLOYEMDE/ GET SELF-EMPLOYED
TEA GHTRI/ EAT RIGHT	HARES KILLSS/ SHARE SKILLS
KAME IENDSFR/ MAKE FRIENDS	DEAR OKOSB/ READ BOOKS
EB DINK/BE KIND	SHIF AND TUNH/ FISH AND HUNT
EULAV ILYFAM/ VALUE FAMILY	DNIF A RAPTNER/ FIND A PARTNER
HERGAT PPLIESU/ GATHER SUPPLIES	RNEAL DWIL STNAPL/ LEARN WILD PLANTS
LRNEA ERULTCUMA- PER/LEARN	TWNEORK/NETWORK
PERMACULTURE	EVAH OR APTDO DRENCHIL/HAVE OR ADOPT CHILDREN
SERAI AND ARESH OFOD/RAISE AND SHARE FOOD	XIF ROUY OWN SENICHMA/FIX YOUR OWN MACHINES
VEAH A TEP/ HAVE A PET	UDYST TSRIF DAI/ STUDY FIRST AID
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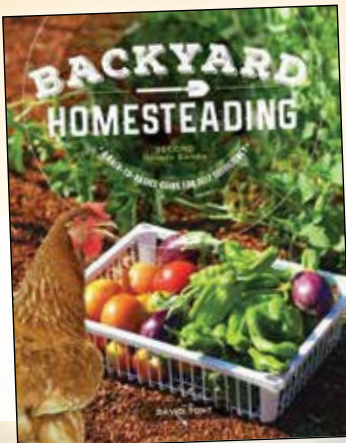
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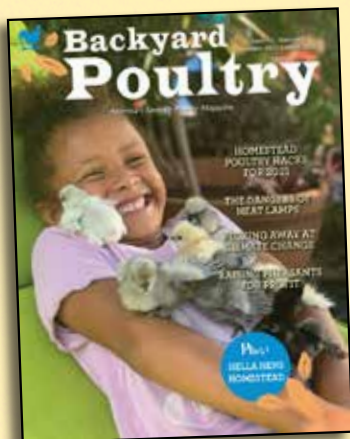
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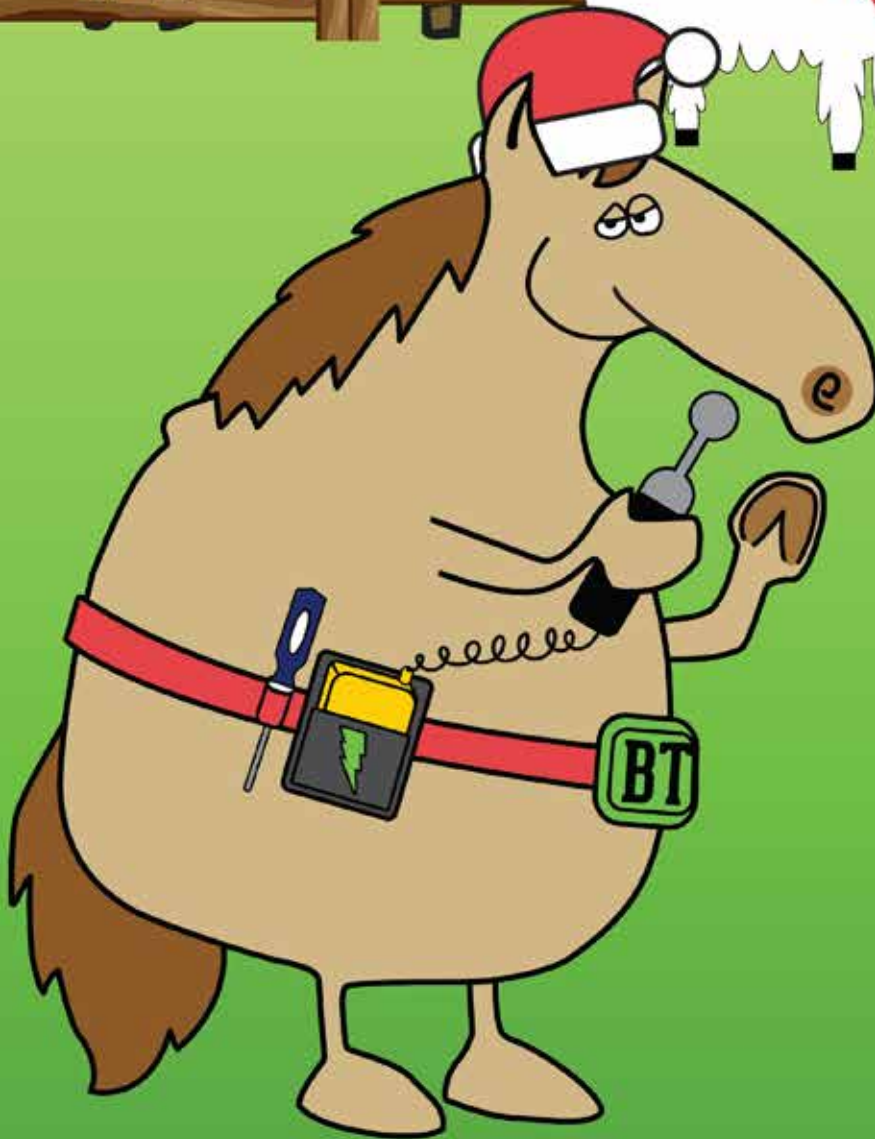
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