

# PLAYHAVEN FARM LLC & GREEN BUILDING PROJECT



## SUSTAINABLE FARMING : ADVENTURES IN CATTLE, VOL. 1

### PLEASE NOTE:

Everything included in "Sustainable Farming : Adventures In Cattle, Vol. 1" has been transposed directly from the website. That includes references to the PlayHaven Farm LLC and Green Building Project (PHF&GBP) website pages, external websites, links to documents, etc. Because of how quickly things change on the internet, there are NO links from this document.

### SUMMER GUESTS (JUNE 2012)



OH MY GOODNESS!!! I had been wishing that we knew someone who would put their cattle on our 10-acre lot to eat the grass (et al) and leave manure for the soil...

AND VIOLA! I let the dogs out into the backyard this morning (June 15) and they barked at something... I turned to look and there were 2 cows standing next to the garage!!

Come to find out, one of our neighbors had cattle in a field to the north of us and something spooked them and they went through, knocking down the electric fence.

They found their way to our acreage and put themselves into the 10-acre lot.

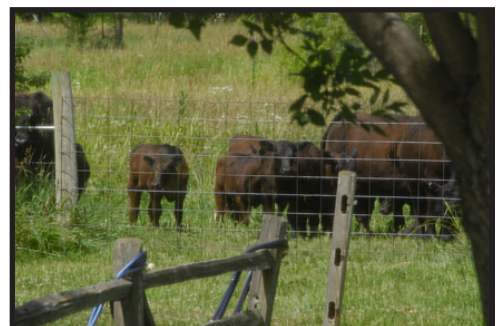
I closed the gate (after looking around to see if there were any left on the outside of that lot) and was in the process of trying to find where they came from when one of the owners drove up in a truck. OH she was SO happy to know they were safe.

They were going to truck them back and after some talking about how we aren't using the pasture for anything and needing to amend the soil with manure... anyway, they decided (if it was OK with us) to leave the 20 cow/calf pairs and 2 bulls on our lot.

We have water access, so he brought a huge trough and is going to pay the water bill.

Talk about a Win-Win situation!! Thank You Powers That Be!

So, while they aren't our cattle, we are one step closer to being real farmers (and we have a cattle mentor!).



The cattle will have been with us for three (3) weeks come Friday (7-6-12). It seems longer... but in a good way! They probably won't be with us for much longer because 10 acres doesn't support 32 units (1 cattle equals 1 unit, but a cow/calf pair equals 1.5 units) for a very long time.

The grass is getting nicely trampled... there is a very nice amount of manure spread beautifully through out the acreage... AND the cows have trimmed most of the brush along the fence lines!

This morning, after we finished with the chickens, we realized we hadn't seen or heard a cow and went looking for them.

We finally found them at the south end of the property under the trees.

Can you spot them in the picture?

That very dark line of "shadow" is actually cattle.

Usually at this time of day, they are still hanging around on the east fence line close to where the bee hive is.

So we were surprised to see them at the south fence line. Especially since there is less shade there.

The only thing we can figure is that they saw the horses had been turned into the adjacent field. The cattle tend to be rather curious even when they are wary.

We were happy to see they are still with us. I think we will miss them when they leave. That might mean we'll be looking into cattle sooner than later. :-)



The neighbors came to get the cattle on the 11th of July EARLY in the morning. We've had such extremely hot temps this summer and that day we actually had a cool morning. The stress of moving being plenty for the cattle to deal with, moving them on this cool morning was very important.

There are only a couple of pictures because I stayed on the outside of the pasture away from the activity. Even though they were here for about a month, I was still enough of a stranger that I could have spooked them. So I only came in close once the last load were in the trailer.

It took 3 trips. I missed the first load which had (probably) the bulls and some of the cows. The rest of the cows were loaded for the second trip and that made the calves easier to maneuver 'cuz they were leaderless and wanting their mommies!



Here you can see the cows behind the cattle panels (well, you MIGHT be able to see them, it was nice and shady and early). They have tags in their ears that you might be able to see.

The calves are huddled on the outside to the right of the small tree.



Our neighbor herded the calves into the panels and closed it behind them.

Then he slowly walked behind them and they simply scurried through the chute into the trailer.

I was amazed at how easy a time he had of it. I shouldn't have been suprised considering how much experience he has!



It all took just about an hour and here you see the last load heading home.

We were sad to see them go. We got so used to having them there... the smell, the sounds, etc.

The pasture feels very empty now.

We are now motivated to get that pasture improved so we can put some livestock of our own on it. With the drought and wanting to add warm season native perennials in addition to forbs, it might take us another year before we feel comfortable putting year-round livestock on it. (Fingers and toes crossed for us.)

In case you have never seen it before, this is cow manure.

Looks alot like rich dirt, doesn't it? Well, that is rather a good description. Because the cow's digestive system is very much a highly efficient composting tool. They chop up grass and put it through a series of decomp chambers and spread it as they walk.

It is SO nutritious that insects are drawn to it to lay their eggs in it so they can feed on it when they hatch.



Once we have the pasture improved to the point of adding livestock, we will be using a 'mob-grazing' strategy that will include having the chickens follow behind the cattle to eat the insects and larvae and scatter the manure piles even more so that the sub-aquatic culture of the soil will have easier access to that wonderful organic material.

Remember, this is the way nature works. Everything eats something else and EVERYTHING poops. It is not natural (or even desirable) to create a sanitized agricultural environment. The best and healthiest soil, plants, animals have natural, strong immune systems that you can only get by being exposed to and living through diseases, parasites, and other physical challenges. When humans try to cut corners in this area, we only mess it up and then we are responsible for dealing with the problems that we create.

Of course, I AM NOT saying that we should all play in manure and not wash our hands before we eat. That would just be foolishness. I'm saying that the chickens are designed (whether by evolution or what your belief system says) to pick through fecal matter (among other things) to eat insects and they are not adversely affected by it and it doesn't adversely affect their meat or the eggs they produce.

## OUR OWN HERD - IT'S A START (APRIL 2013)

It is official... we have started our own little herd of cattle. We picked up a young Belted Galloway (unregistered) bull and a steer from Blackwater Bend Farm on the same day that we picked up two (2) breed-able Galloway-type (meaning crossed from Belted Galloways with Angus and Brahma) heifers from Worstell Farm. The Belted Galloway is a dual purpose breed, but this first little herd is our foray into meat production... dairy will come later.

Once again we are blessed to have friends who are helping us newbees. The Butlers let us borrow their vehicle/livestock trailer to get the cattle. (Shameless Plug: Comfort Solutions for your Insulation Needs in KCMO and surrounding areas! See the Insulation page for contact info.)

Their truck is a manual transmission, 6-gears, diesel... the trailer is a bit wider than the truck. So, there was a bit of a learning curve even though the hubby has driven manual transmissions and trailers for many years.

The truck sits up very high and I am not very tall or agile, so Eric loaned me a milk carton to use as a step in. Getting out was easy, a sliding fall. LOL



Here are Mr. Worstell and his sister prepping the paddock into a chute for the trailer (the red metal). The ground was pretty soft and the trailer wheels were pretty low, but the truck has 4 wheel drive, so no problems.

Mr. Worstell had barely opened the gate from the shed where the girls were before they rushed up onto the trailer. I guess they were ready to come home with us! I didn't even have time to put the camera up and snap a shot --- they were THAT fast.

Mr. Worstell fastened the gate in the middle of the trailer. This set-up let us get all the cattle in one long trip instead of two long trips. We got there at 5 minutes before 10 am and after loading and writing the check for the balance due, we were on the road at 10 am. It was amazingly easy. Thank you to the Gods of Beginners Luck. LOL

The ladies were sent away with some hay in the trailer and some hay in the pickup bed.



It was a windy trip back for them, so we drove no faster than 55 mph. They soon figured out that the bigger one (Button, #23) made a good wind block when she let the wind blow on her side.

They were certainly interested in site-seeing though... very curious; that is until we stopped for some lunch and stepped back to say hello, then they were all shyness.

All that wind certainly removed the remainder of their winter coat! They looked wonderful when we finally got back to our farm.





Flooding made getting to Blackwater Bend Farm a bit tricky since they are so close to the Blackwater River here in Missouri. But we found a route with not too much trouble (both in and out) and were only a few minutes late due to one or two wrong turns.

They were ready for us. Plus the boys had been sprayed for lice (the vet had found lice on another animal at the farm during a recent visit); they should have another round in a couple weeks so we'll host Jeff and Dianna at our place so they can do that.

The boys are lined up and ready to go. The trailer was quite a bit further from the ground at this location (wheels didn't sink here) so it took them a couple tries to figure out they could jump in.

Still, it was a short time and I didn't get a shot of that loading either (darn it!).



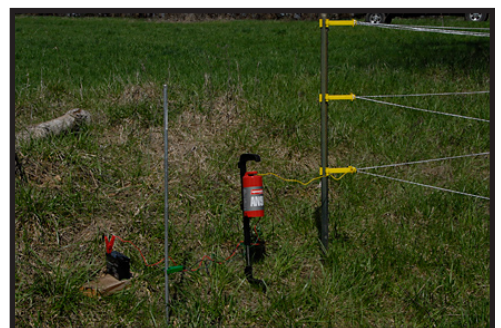
Getting the gate on the trailer closed and moving the chute away.

Saying "Hello!"



All loaded up and ready to go. The boys were so calm, they were eating the hay in the trailer before we even pulled out.

The set up at our farm: a temporary 3-strand electric fence perimeter of about 100 x 50 feet.





We are truly experiencing Beginners Luck! No sooner had we gotten the trailer positioned into the “chute” of the “getting to know you and get used to being in this strange place” paddock and opened the back gate than the boys jumped into the grass.

We gave them a minute to get their bearings and then opened the middle gate to let the girls follow suit... which they did, no problems! Result: empty trailer only 8 hours after picking up the pickup and trailer.

These critters have their priorities straight! After many hours in a moving, windy trailer, they all found the juiciest, sweetest grass in the paddock!

Viola! this is what grass-fed beef look like most of the time.



Ah, found the water... nice refreshing drink!

We are “winging it” at the moment by hauling water in another tank just like the one in the photo by carrying it on the flat bed trailer on top of an inverted tank. That way we put a short end of hose on the plug and let the water gravity flow from it to the one on the ground.

We’ll be upgrading our watering systems as we learn more and also as we correct some erosion issues on the land.

After quenching their thirst, the job of “who is the boss and what is my position in this group” got started. No violence, just a bunch of head butts and some running around.

Here’s the results:

- Button (female) - Lead
- Nike (female) - 2nd in command
- Ferny (male) - top of the boys, but 3rd in line overall
- and last but not least: Sir Loin (steer - recently weaned and castrated).



It’s not over until the equipment is put away. In this case: the trailer cleaned out, the diesel fuel filled to the top and the whole rig returned to the Butlers.

It was an exhausting but very productive day.

Yes, we hit the pillows early... boy did we sleep!



I didn't get photos, but on Sunday morning (the next morning) we discovered Sir Loin outside of the fenced area. No wire was down, no disturbance at all to the electric fence. And yet he was out grazing. We can only assume that he was laying by the fence overnight and moved somehow so that he was under the wire and out when he stood up. He certainly did not seem to be aware of his "escape". The hubby ran a wire down the middle of the previously enclosed pasture to keep the other cattle inside while he opened up the chute where we unloaded them the night before. I herded Sir Loin toward it by using the "flight zone" techniques we had been studying. It worked beautifully! He trotted into the pasture and we closed the fence behind him. You should have heard his bellow at that point! I could swear he said: OK, I'm in, but I STILL can't get to my friends!!! It took only another moment or two for the hubby to remove that temporary wire.

The hubby adjusted the 3-strand fence down to 2-strands on Sunday and had planned to take it to 1-strand and leave them there a third day (moving them on Tuesday)... but that first pasture was beautifully trampled and eaten in 2-days. In fact, on Monday morning, he found Ferny laying down and reaching his head under the wire to get to fresh grass. That's a clue that they are ready to move. So he finished setting up the next area and opened a wire between the first and second area. Nike was first to venture over (she and Button being used to strip-grazing at their previous farm), followed by Button and then a bit later by the boys who finally realized the wire was not there.

Once in the new area, the wire went back up to keep the cattle from eating the fresh grass that would grow there.

The plan with strip grazing is to set up multiple pasture divisions and move the cattle every day to fresh grass. The trick is figuring out how much space it takes four cattle to eat one day's worth of grass. No book can tell you -- this depends on your location, your soil conditions, your grass and your cattle. Trial and error are the tools here. You also need to be sure to provide "alleys" back to the water source.

### **FLUSH OF GRASS (MAY 2013)**

All of the photos below (except for the last one) were taken on April 30.

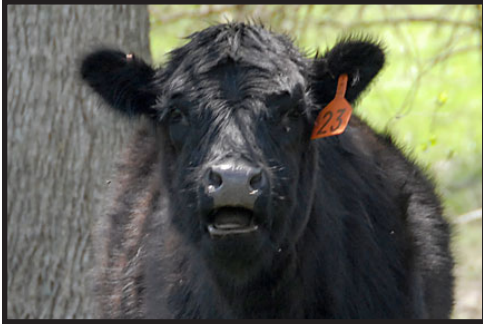
The heifers are very comfortable here and the steer is young enough that here is as good as anywhere. Our young bull, on the other hand, is old enough to have learned some trust issues and has lived at two other farms already, so is not yet a 'happy camper'.

The girls have been such a help about getting the boys used to the strip grazing. They understand that when the wire is removed, they are good to move into the fresh grass... the boys took several days of watching the girls move before they FINALLY got the message.

We are getting better at figuring out how much space they need and designing the set-up to make it easy for them to get to the water, etc.

We have decided to 'bucket train' the cattle. The hubby has been bribing them with the corn (as Mr. Wostell suggested) and I also have him using carrots (so we can switch them over to those, since I prefer they don't eat corn). Button is the most social and readily accepts her treat from his hand now. She even lets him rub her head sometimes. Nike is a bit stand-offish, but we think she will come around eventually. The boys are from a farm where the owners lived off-site, and Ferny was originally purchased from another farm, making this his third home and that likely as not explains his reluctance to trust. But they too are starting to trust the hubby.

As of the time of this photo, it has been several days since any of the cattle have 'escaped' the fenced area(s). Here is the hubby preparing for 'bucket training'. He has earned the trust of Button and both Nike and SirLoin will come close to get their reward... Ferny is being a bit more stubborn about coming close.



Close up of Button  
(as in: Cute as a...)

She's actually chewing, but I could use this photo with a caption... hmmm. And, YES, I know... corn. I said there wouldn't be any on the farm, but I relented for the purpose of beginning the bucket training. The hubby has already reduced the corn and is switching over to carrots. I'm buying organic juicing carrots for them. Because that's how we do things.



As usual, this is Button:  
first in line.

Here is Nike (can't see her 'swish' from this side) coming a little closer than last time which warrants her reward being tossed to her.



Poor Ferny - doesn't he just look pitiful! This photo makes him appear much bigger than he is.

He really liked the previous day's grazing section because there was a little stream in it and he enjoyed standing in the water.

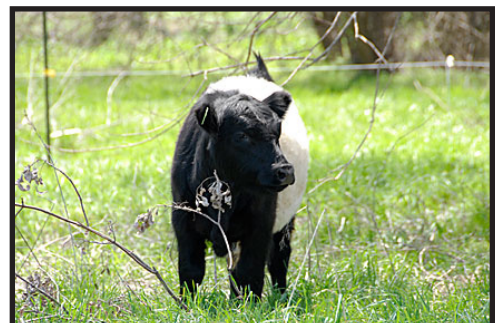
The hubby reinforced the electric wire between today and yesterday's areas to help remind Ferny to stay out of it. Thus the poor, pitiful me look.

He did finally come close enough for a reward.



Sir Loin is very photo-genic.  
Here he is grazing after his training.

Sir Loin again... he even followed the hubby around for a little while hoping for another reward.







Sir Loin is a tree-hugger (LOL). This tree makes for a great scratching post.

And now for the kick-in-the-pants photo, below... it is May 3rd, and we had at least an inch of accumulated snow (after rain and sleet) overnight. It is still snowing at the time of this photo (around 11:30 am) and projected to continue overnight. Thankfully, the temp is above freezing so probably no more accumulation.

As the hubby posted on Facebook this morning: "Early morning cattle lesson: White snow + white electric paddock fences = cattle roaming around the field (within the perimeter fence). All were happy to see me with the food bucket, get a carrot and follow me back to their designated paddock. Now they are back among the trees with snow still falling. Not much accumulating, but still...yuk!"

Which is to say that the herd 'escaped' this morning. The electric wire accumulated some snow and must have shorted out and the cattle decided to explore since they couldn't really see the wire against the snow... they knocked a section down.



Thank goodness for bucket training!! They followed the hubby comfortably and when Button decided she didn't want to wait for her treat, a simple arm gesture stopped her from coming too close.

One benefit from this weather event... last night we saw the herd gathered tightly together under the trees in a nice little defensive group. Usually the girls hang out together and SirLoin moves between them and Ferny. This is helping them to become a cohesive group. Even now (as I type at noon on Friday, the 3rd) they have travelled to the water together (the photo) and are grazing close to each other. Don't you just love silver linings? :)

Oh yes, one more bit of news... we think the heifers are getting closer into what we dog-folk call 'heat' (in cattle it's 'estrous'). We think this because Ferny is starting to be interested in their scent. We haven't seen any 'amorous' behaviour yet... yet.

## MOOWERS (JULY 2013)

Dear me, it has been SEVERAL months and I have been remiss about updating you on the cattle. My Bad. Let's see... over the last several months, the hubby has gotten much more comfortable with the electric fencing and is getting so much better at determining how much space to give per day. This is good, because managing your acreage of grazing area is important so you have enough for each cow each day AND you make sure to have your reserves off-limit so it is there for the winter.

We have learned SO much from books by Greg Judy, Joe Salatin and (of course) Jim Gerrish and Allan Nation about grazing management. Plus a book recommended by Mr. Worstel: Grass-Fed Cattle by Julius Ruechel is proving to be SO helpful for us new-to-cattle-entirely folk.

Memorial Day weekend was a biggee here, we strung an 'alley' made with electric fence wire (not 'live') and guided the cattle from the end of the farm where they were to the other end of the farm on the adjacent pasture. In other words, a REALLY LONG WAY (relatively speaking on 20 acres). The hubby lead the way with a bucket of corn nibbles and I followed since they didn't know me well and that caused them to move toward the hubby. There was much wanting to stop and gorge on the lovely trees along the way, but we wanted those trees available later, so we kept them moving.

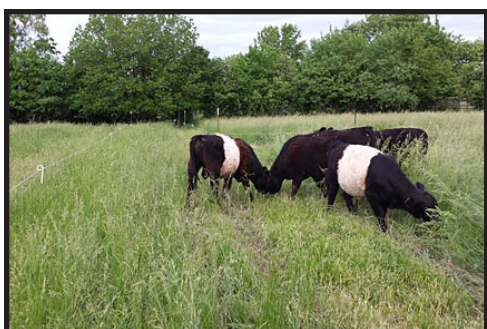


This is what the grass looked like when they finally made it to their new location. Looks lush and wonderful, don't you think? So did they! It is a bit deceptive though, when pasture grasses make seed heads, it's a sure sign that the pasture is not in the best condition possible (\*\*MUST\*\*PROCREATE\*\*TO\*\*SURVIVE\*\* says the grass). And while the cows DO eat the stalks and some of those seed heads, they really want the grass blades down low.

Here you see how much of the winter coat has come off (this was in early June). That is Ferny closest to the camera - he is eating minerals out of one of the containers.

The hubby started mowing (at about 1 foot high) the lines for the electric fencing so it would not discharge every time the wind blew a grass stalk onto it.

Since our pasture is 330 feet wide, the hubby sets up the alley to go the entire width and makes the daily divisions from it. There is shade and trees to munch on at both fencelines... they like that very much!



This photo shows the simple, but highly effective use of electric polywire. Most of the time the cows stay in the area designated. There have been incidents of a cow making their way to the wrong side of the electric fence (usually Ferny). It's not too difficult to entice them back with their buddies (again, usually).

I haven't included a photo of their watering set-up, hmm, need to do that next time. Basically, we have two (2) 50-gallon stock tanks and we put one of them in the alley with a really heavy-duty hose connected from the field hydrant to a valve thingy-ma-bob that sits inside the stock tank. (Technical term, sorry, it has a real name, but it escapes me as I write this.) Anyway, we can turn on the water and leave it to do other things and the valve thingy stops the water before it flows over the side. Then we go turn off the water (just in case, better safe than sorry with a BIG water bill). They don't usually go through the whole tank in a day, so it's pretty much a case of topping off the water each day.

We think both of the girls have been bred... Ferny told us when they were ready and the hubby marked the dates on the calendar so he could when they would come "in" again (21 days later). Ferny has confirmed that time frame is correct and it looks like we'll have an April calf from Button and a May calf from Nike. This is assuming ALOT from just seeing Ferny mount the girls. They should not come "in" once they are bred, so if we see him mount again in 21 days from the last time, we'll know to move the date(s) back (and back and back... let's hope not).

OK, that's it for now... questions? Feel free to contact me. As always, more to come (hopefully sooner than this last time).



## PHOTOS OF MOOWERS (SEPTEMBER 2013)

In these images, you see Nike (background) and Button munching on a type of aster after being allowed into their next pasture spot.



Button was overcome with curiosity at what the hubby has in his hand... is it for me? can I eat it? hee hee hee



## PUMPKINS AND COLD WEATHER (JANUARY 2014)

I have been remiss getting pictures of the cows uploaded. The hubby has been taking photos with his phone, so I haven't had to haul my camera out to the pasture and, viola! I forget about photos.

Anyway, I hope you enjoy seeing the cows be cows.

You feed pumpkins to your cows? Yes, we do. There is a PDF in the General Store with the information about how I glean unsaleable Jack-O-Lantern pumpkins from local businesses. It includes an attached PDF about the value of pumpkins as food for livestock entitled *Alternative Crops for Beef Cattle*. (This shows Ferny [upper left], Button and SirLoin happy to get their pumpkins.)



Are they edible? OH HECK YES. The cattle LOVE the pumpkins. They run across the field when they see us hauling them in the big tubs we use. We thought we'd have to cut them up, but it turns out carving pumpkins split really well when thrown to the ground...as any malevolent trick-or-treater will tell you. (This is Ferny.)

They munch the entire pumpkin... once there is access, they eat the seeds and then crunch away on the fibrous inside and the shell as well. (This is Nike.)







Once the weather freezes the pumpkins (which are stored in a ShelterLogic Shed), the hubby hauls the next days allotment into the basement to thaw and then takes them to the cattle in the late afternoon. Some of the pumpkins get pretty squishy, but nobody seems to mind. (This is Button sharing with SirLoin. Button is behind SirLoin in this picture.)

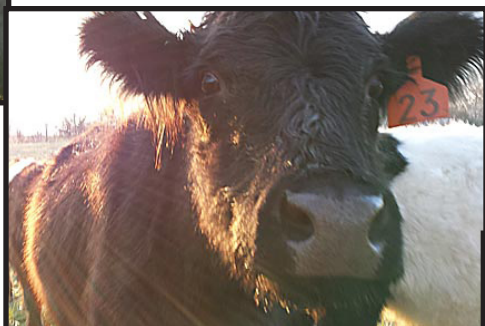
I love this sequence the hubby captured late in the day when the cattle realized he was here with their pumpkin. Lining up and heading in. (Let's see the order here is [from right to left]: SirLoin, Button, Ferny and [bringing up the rear from across the field] Nike.)



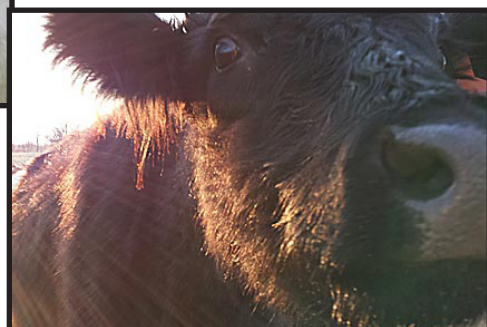
What's he got in his hand?  
Button thinks as her ears rotate back (also could be because Ferny is smack dab behind her).



I think I'll check it out.



Hey, watcha got there?



Can I eat it?



OK, I deliberated about whether to put this one up. There is actually a more explicit shot to prove that our bull is doing his duty... so I decided not to use that one.

This is our bull, Ferny, mounting Button in November. According to the calculations by the hubby, this breeding "took" and we should see a calf in September.

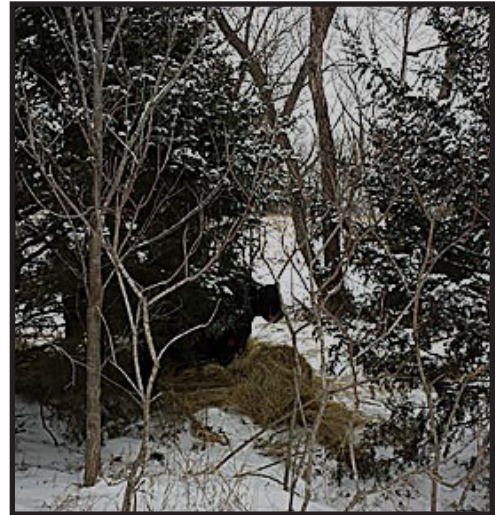


It's amazing how interesting we humans must be. Often the cows just stand and look at us. OR, maybe they are wondering why we aren't communicating with them... are we stupid or something? LOL (This is SirLoin... the steer that we will 'cow-pool' in June 2014.)



We had freezing rain (about 1/4 inch) and then an inch or so of snow. Here you can see the amazing insulating ability of a cow's hide. Because the ice proves that the heat is staying inside ... otherwise the ice would melt. (This is SirLoin.)

At right are two (2) different views of the sheltered hollow where we put their hay during the Polar Vortex of 2014.



(Hoping there is only one and I don't have to come back and note it was January 5 & 6th to differentiate it from later ones. I shudder to think.) The photo on the top is from the west and the one on the bottom is from the south. The dominant wind during winter is from the northwest. Someday we'll be able to put up an actual hay/shelter structure with water... but it wasn't this year. Heavy sigh.



### SIRLOIN DEPARTS... 3 STEERS ARRIVE (JUNE 2014)



At left was SirLoin a few days after he arrived at the farm last Spring.

At right is SirLoin in all his glory the day before he left the farm. ALL from eating grass and plants the way cows are SUPPOSED to eat!



SirLoin was great about going to the processor. He had no fear getting into the horse trailer and was only a little anxious leaving it to head into the holding pen at the processor. The USDA rep asked me if he was bottle fed (that's how easily he worked for him). I told him: No, we strip graze and he is used to being moved every day. By the way, before he left the farm, I talked to SirLoin and thanked him for doing such a good job eating the grass, irrigating and fertilizing the pasture and providing us (and the other share holders) with such lovely meat/food. I spoke to the processor on Monday and the hanging



weight was 412 lbs. (Which is only 8 lbs lower than our estimate. YIPPEE!!) Calculating backwards, he weighs about 687 lbs here. That's close to a 300 lb gain in 12 months.

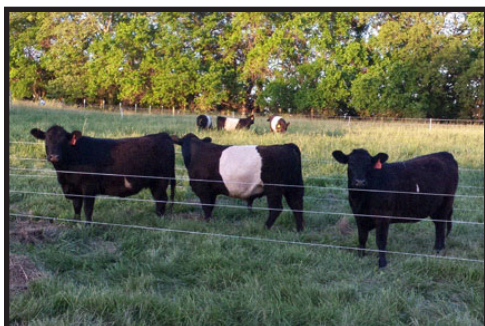
After dropping off SirLoin, the hubby and I rode along with a farmer friend who was also purchasing some Belted Galloway calves from a ranch near Neosho, MO: Legacy Ranch Belties. It was nice to be able to share the burden of gas and load everybody into his big stock trailer. We even got a short tour of the herd before heading home.



And here they are! The three (3) calves are a bit smaller than I remembered SirLoin being. We're told they weigh about 400 lbs each... guess my memory is fading on me. LOL They are considered fall calves (probably born in December, didn't get paperwork on them because they are steers). They were weaned the Monday before we picked them up (on Friday).

All three (3) of the steers "dug in" to the grass in their pasture!

After the long day of being in the paddock waiting for us and that long drive home, they were HUNGRY!! We added some 'Basic H' to their water to clear out any worm issues. The steers are so much alike (in appearance) and their ear tags just say "S" for steer... not sure if we'll be able to tell them apart enough to give them names. Here are some ideas we are kicking around: Porterhouse, T-bone and Steak. (Cuz they are pretty much describing the same thing. LOL)

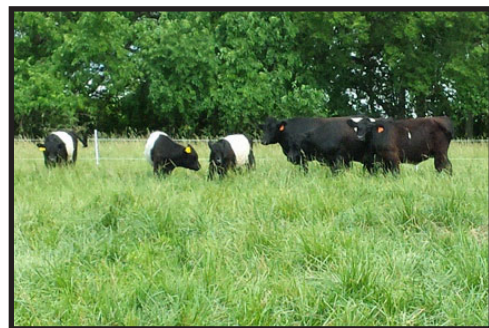


Their pasture was separate from the adults by a three-strand electric fence for the first few days.

Here are the adults checking out the steers (who are smart and eating on the opposite side of the pasture, LOL).

The cows seem to be asking us what they are supposed to do with THOSE things? Do you call that an even trade (for SirLoin)?

Here everybody is... together in the same pasture space. They had been looking at each other over that fence for several days. Time to get acquainted.... although the steers are a bit hesitant of that at first.



It did not take long, though, for everyone to figure out their place in the herd. The playing continues and acceptance reigns. Grateful Big Sigh.



A close up of Ferny... looking like a BULL, finally. LOL



## ONE LITTLE HAPPY FAMILY OF MOOWERS (JULY 2014)

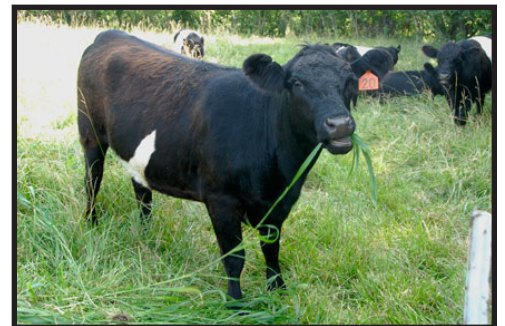


The joy of a fresh paddock! You can tell the cows are happy cuz they are quiet and their heads are down (eating).

Lovely Nike finds the pile of Giant Foxtail that the hubby removed from a garden location and shared with the cows. Yummy.



Two of the calves/steers. They are still shy of us, but getting a bit more confidence.



While Nike munches on the Giant Foxtail, the rest of the family hangs out in the shade.

It's difficult to see in these photos, but there are bunches of little black flies hanging out on the backs of all the cattle. Interestingly, there appear to be LESS on the steers than on the adults. Not sure why.



We use "Basic H" in a sprayer to help reduce the fly problem. It is an eco-friendly solution and is quite effective (for short periods of time).

We've also noticed there are several birds hanging out around the cattle, swooping low over them to catch flies. GREAT JOB, BIRDS!!

## A NEW ADDITION (SEPTEMBER 2014)

The hubby and I are of the mindset that nature does best when left to its own devices. So while he was acting like an expectant father and I was a bit nervous myself... we had already decided NOT to invest in calf-pulling paraphernalia, milk bottles, etc. because what would be, would be. If Button did

not have an easy, natural birth, we would need to remove her from our herd... and if the calf died, well, that is part of life and not uncommon with a first-time cow.

And then... Button had her calf: a boy! It was August 20 sometime just before dawn. The hubby went out to open up the chickens' coops and check on Button and found her "disposing" of the afterbirth. I got out there at 6:30 am and got to see the calf stand up for the first time. Button was not sure what to do! She looked to us for answers: "what IS this thing and what do I do NOW?" and "It's trying to attach itself to me!" We talked to her and encouraged her to stand still and LET IT attach itself. Then we left because we believe the less we interfere, the better.



Luckily, we kept an eye on them through that first day. A couple hours later I saw her laying in the pasture when the rest of the herd had headed to shade. I figured she was laying next to her calf. Then she got up and nudged at something and after a few minutes headed to the shade herself. UH OH, was my thought. I hurried over -- praying all the way -- fearful that I would find a dead calf in the grass. (New mommas sometimes lose their first calves from inexperience.) I found the calf and it flicked its tail. ALIVE! but covered in flies and Button had left it. I brushed away the flies with my gloved hands and then went to get the Basic H fly spray (diluted greatly in anticipation of the calf). I wet the calf down fully (it was a hot day) and most of the flies left. All the while, I was hollering to Button that you DO NOT leave your calf... for any reason! Well, someone had to tell her.

In the meantime, Button was paying attention to me and had started back up the hill. I backed off as she arrived and the calf got to its feet. Button still didn't seem to understand she needed to stand still for the calf and I started telling to her to stand still and encouraging the calf to suckle... it occurred to me to make the sucking noise and did that as loudly as I could.

Suddenly, the calf perked up and Button seemed to know understand that sound. She stood and waited as the calf came up and finally figured out to latch on and suck. I made the sound as I watched them and Nike came up to see what was going on.

When the calf let go, I started encouraging them all to follow me to the shade, but no one moved. I realized I was now between the ladies/calf and the rest of the herd. Not a good idea. So I remembered my training of how to move cattle in the direction you want them to go and started walking past them the other direction inside their comfort zone. They understood immediately and ambled down to the shade with the calf (a bit unsteadily) following all the way. Once everyone was in the shade, I left.



Later that day, the hubby was checking on them and found that the older cattle had made their way deeper into the shade by crossing the ravine and the calf was still on the other side (where the shade would be leaving very soon). Button had bonded enough to be bellowing for the calf to come to her. She crossed the ravine and tried to lead him down into it, but the calf was having none of that hole! The hubby moved the calf to a spot where a 'land bridge' crossed the ravine and the calf made his way back to Button. The moral of the story (LOL), is that we put Button into the position of having a calf, so it's OK for us to assist her from time to time.



The whole group the next day. The little fellow really stands out with that bright, white belt!



## A SECOND ADDITION (NOVEMBER 2014)



She was very good at hiding in the tall grass... it took me a little while to find her, LOL.

Nike had her calf: a girl! It was September 24 about 8:15 pm. Gary was there to assist her with clearing the sac from it's nose. It appears to have been an easy birth (thank goodness) and Nike is a very attentive and protective momma.

The next couple of close-ups of the calf make her appear to be rather large... so here is Nike laying next to the calf so you can get a better perspective. The calf is that white line in front of (below) the white 'swish' (from whence Nike derives her name).



Nike was a short distance away watching me. I was careful to use the telephoto lens so as not to get TOO close. We've taken to calling her 'Victoria' because she comes from Nike (the Greek Goddess of Victory) and the Roman version of Nike is Victoria. So, it's Vicki for short.

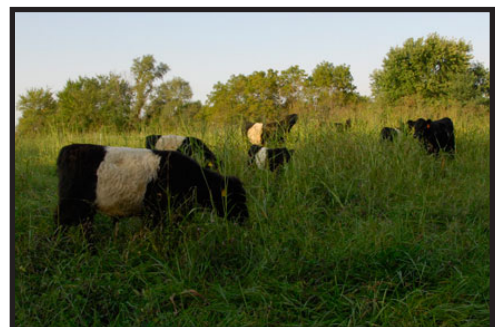


The hubby caught this image. He thought it was the 3rd time Vicki had nursed.

We have discovered that Nike has a very loud, penetrating call for her calf to come get it's dinner.

And, like most protective mothers, she let's Vicki know when she is not happy with whatever Vicki is up to... that call (can't really call it a "moo") is highly effective; it really carries.

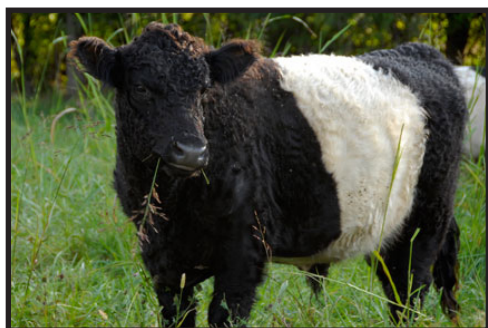
The whole crew chowing down. Nike is the black cow on the right looking at the camera. If I recall correctly, Vicki was directly in front of her, napping.





You are probably wondering how Button's calf is doing and if we ever named it. Here he is below: Filet Mignon or 'Fil' for short. He's about a month old here. FAST! Oh my goodness, when he has just had some milk he gets a burst of energy and races around so much he accidentally gets through the electric fence. Button is a bit mellow about her calf than Nike is and we only hear her bellow when Fil has strayed too far or he needs to nurse RIGHT NOW. We've only had to help him back through the fence a couple of times, mostly he figures out how to duck under on his own.

Ferny and the boys hanging out at the waterer(s). The low tub is so the calves can get some water since they are too small to reach the normal one.



Ferny chewing on grass. He has started getting his winter coat in.

At right is a close up of Ferny's face. He is one handsome bull.



Speaking of Ferny... everyone says bulls like to travel and unfortunately, he found his way out of our pasture. The story follows:

A few weeks ago, the cows were in the part of our pasture that aligns with the next door neighbor's cow yard. Unlike us, they restrict their cows all the time to an area that is about the size of 3 days strip grazing for us. It has not had grass growing in it for a long time so their cows get hay all year. Besides which, their sewage lagoon is in that area and while it is supposed to be fenced off, the neighbors have removed a section of the fence and their cattle have access to it as if it were a pond. This is not a healthy thing to do.

Anyway, our cows had been moved past that area and the wind must have been blowing from the right direction because Ferny wanted to be in that cow yard! They had gotten a young bull the weekend before and it was either that or one or more of their cows coming into season; but, regardless, Ferny was yelling to those cows and eyeing the fence an awful lot.

Then, suddenly, there was no yelling and we got a call from the neighbor to tell us Ferny had made his way into their cow yard. OH OH. The hubby rushed home from work and we set to work figuring out how we would get Ferny back home. We found where he went through the fence... an amazingly small hole created by pushing his body between the top of the 4 ft. high field fencing and the strand of barbed wire above it. First order of business: fix that spot and reinforce it. Then the hubby ran electric wire to make an alley around to our gate on the road (about 300 feet away).

Luckily, our neighbors were kind enough to assist us in moving Ferny along the alley after the hubby and I coaxed him out of the cow yard. I say coaxed, but really it was more of a herding situation and it



was NOT easy! He did NOT want to leave... especially when they put out the nightly hay for the other cows (we hoped that would make it easier... but he was HUNGRY!).

There were several mistakes along the way... moving him too fast and him doubling back at the same speed for one. Finally, we went very slowly, letting him eat the fresh grass in the alley and inching him toward our fence. We realized he was NOT going to walk that whole 300 feet to the gate and so we cut through our fence in the alley right along side the cow yard fence. What with that being acceptably close to the cows and us humans ringed behind him, he finally jumped through the fence and was back in our pasture.

Phew! this process took about 3 hours to complete. And there was still work to be done! First we turned off the electric to our pasture wires and put up wires between him and the gate to the road. Then we encouraged him down the pasture to where our cows were eating happily and drove (herded) him in with them closing the electric fence wire behind him. As soon as that was done, the electric fence was turned back on.

At that point, the hubby repaired the cut in the fence that he had made. The next day, he used some of the electric wire to create a boxed-off area along the fence where the neighbor's cow yard is. It has a separate electric battery and stays on ALL the time now because it is completely separate from the strip grazing setup.

No one saw Ferny mount any of the neighbor's cows. But, it's possible and we won't know if he fathered any calves unless one of the cows delivers a calf with a belt. By the way, there was no fighting between Ferny and their new bull. It is young and deferred to Ferny easily. We were very lucky there. We are also hoping he didn't get any diseases from that sewage lagoon since we do NOT feed antibiotics to any of our animals. (NOTE: it's been several weeks and Ferny appears to be as healthy as ever. Thankful!)

I am REALLY hoping that the neighbor's bull does it's job before we move our cows anywhere near that part of the pasture again. Without the cows cycling, there is less to entice Ferny to go traveling again. Cross your fingers and toes for us, will you?

## **ALONE ON THE FARM FOR 2 WEEKS (DECEMBER 2014)**

If you follow the farm on Facebook, you may have already read about my biggest adventures during this time OR you may have read the Blog Entry. It's here so you don't have to go looking for it.

The hubby occasionally travels for work and he tries to keep the duration of each trip to a minimum so that I am not overwhelmed by all of the farm chores. Now that we have begun meeting people who are interested in coming out to the farm to help, this should not be as big of an issue... Thankfully. Unfortunately, we are so used to doing everything ourselves, it's hard to remember to contact these people ahead of time to find out if they are available during these days. One of my goals in 2015 is to be more proactive about contacting these lovely people.

So, in December 2014, the hubby was scheduled to work in South Africa and I figured I could handle things... so long as he contacted people to be a back up if I needed them. What I had thought was a one (1) week trip turned out to be 15 days and that was TOO long. Especially since the back-up turned out to have holiday travel plans and I was totally on my own.

## **INACCURATE EXPECTATIONS**

From my experience last year, I figured taking care of the cattle during this trip would be pretty easy... last year at this time we were able to open up the entire pasture because the ground had frozen and the grass had safely sent all their energy into their roots. All I had to do then was make sure the water

trough was full, the hose got emptied out (so it wouldn't freeze), toss some pumpkins to the cattle, keep the minerals topped off and provide a bale of hay each day.

Turns out, I was wrong. The weather was still moderate and while the grass may have sent their energy into their roots, the hubby's plans for strip grazing was not finished yet. (Which, is actually a REALLY GOOD THING... just not for me. LOL) I have to give him credit... he spent many hours before he left working on the electric polywire divisions so that there would 21 days worth of strip grazing (plenty, since he would be gone 15 days). All I had to do (or so we thought) was remove a wire once a day and put it up in the next row (because we have a limited supply of polywire). However, the cattle had some different ideas about how much grass was enough each day. Either Nike or Button (and even sometimes, Ferny) would watch for me to come out of the house and start hollering at me that I needed to give them more food. Luckily, we still had plenty of pumpkins left.

Plus, there was the change regarding Ferny. In case you have not read that story, our next door neighbor now has a young bull to breed their cows and Ferny decided he needed to assert his dominance over that bull back in October. Short version: Ferny got into their cow yard and we had to get him home. Since then Ferny has been overly interested in the neighbor's cattle and we have had to beef up (pun intended) the barrier to keep him at home.

## **THE ROUTINE**

So here is how my routine went (including taking care of the chickens, which I do normally anyway; except that the hubby usually opens the coop at dawn)...

Get up just before dawn, throw on clothes, boots, coat, gloves and go out to open the chicken coop. (Pray that the cattle are not awake yet.) If the cattle aren't yelling, go back to bed for about an hour. Get up the second time and feed the dog. Bundle up and go out to the cattle after turning off the electricity to the polywire and remembering to take my walking stick. I usually took the pumpkins (18 pie size was about right for 3 adults and 3 yearlings because the calves only nibbled) which I had gathered into the wheelbarrow the previous night. I cut the pumpkins in half with a huge, serrated knife and tossed each piece over the fence being careful so it would not land in a cow-pie because they would not eat those (smart cows). They LOVE the pumpkin!

This left me to make my way into the pasture and over to the next polywire to be removed without the cattle crowding me along the way. Most days I would have the wire at least unhooked so I could walk it over to the next alley to put it up before Nike (usually) decided she had had enough pumpkin and was ready for grass. What the ladies say goes, so if one of them moves, everybody moves. Ferny was always the last to leave the pumpkins and that's probably because he finished them off practically every time. Some days the ladies arrived before I had the polywire removed and then you could practically hear them tapping their feet impatiently. The moment that polywire was on the ground or reeled up, in they would come. It's rather difficult to reel up wire that is stepped on by a cow or twined between legs. Luckily, they get so engrossed in the grass that they don't mind me using my handy dandy walking stick to tap them and encourage them to move a little.

The hubby did ask me to remove the t-posts as they became unused so that the cattle wouldn't use them as scratching posts and break the insulators (at least). I also carried the short temporary fence posts to other spots that needed reinforcing to keep the calves out of the rest of the stockpiled grass. Oh, speaking of that... it was NOT possible to keep the calves from going ANYWHERE within the permanent fencing that they wanted to. Filet Mignon (that's the bull calf) would just put his head under the bottom wire and lift and step forward so that the wires were across his withers while Vicky (his sister) walked under. This was true regardless of whether the electric was off or on. And turning the electricity back on when I was done was VERY IMPORTANT (and some days I forgot for a couple of hours... luckily no problems during those times).



Generally, it took me anywhere from one (1) to two (2) hours to provide pumpkins, open a new section and remove whatever needed to be removed. And, it quickly became clear that each section was NOT a full day's supply of grass. SO, this morning routine ended up rotating sooner than 24 hours (with the exception of the pumpkins... those were only once a day). If I'd opened the first section in the morning, the next would be opened just before dark. Then the following day I would open the next section close to noon and try to ignore the cows until morning for the next section. And so it went... mostly. The end result being that the entire area (minus one section) was opened the day I picked the hubby up from the airport. Oh, and no, I did not block off any area behind them; that is a summer thing.

Anyway, after working on the cattle, I would head inside to recuperate (which took me about an hour just like when I do the yard work in the summer). Then time to bundle up again and give the chickens either their beetles, beans, or alfalfa and check their water and seeds. Head back inside to eat lunch and try to get something done in the house and then time to check on water for the cattle and minerals and collect eggs from the chickens. I tried to do this just before dark so I didn't have to go inside just to come back out and close up the chicken coop... some days I did have to because chickens aren't known for being cooperative. I also loaded the wheelbarrow with the next day's allotment of pumpkins after closing the chicken coop and wheeled it into the garage for the night. In case I hadn't mentioned it, the pie pumpkins were stored in the trailer in the big ShelterLogic structure in the chickens overwinter area. Waiting to load until dark made it easier to maneuver the wheelbarrow through the gate without chickens underfoot. Luckily, I didn't have to thaw any pumpkins during these weeks.

All in all, most days I got nothing done besides the cattle and chickens and putting outside clothing on and off. Until after dark, that is. And by then I didn't want to do anything but sit in a chair and veg out in front of the tv. Looking back, I realize that the first week went relatively smoothly and I was able to get the holiday decorations put up, how about that.

## **EVENTFUL DAYS... SOMETHING I DIDN'T WANT TO HAVE**

**December 11 (Thursday):** Today was tiring. I saw Fernie looking longingly at the neighbors' cows first thing. So I took pumpkins early to entice him back out of the alley and to the rest of the herd. It worked.

So I had some polywire to shift and decided to do that while the herd was distracted by their pumpkins. When suddenly it occurred to me that I had forgotten to turn off the electricity and hadn't gotten shocked. OH OH.

Back to the energizer with the tester and unable to get it to show anything conducting. FULL PANIC ATTACK. Gary working far from home today. Bull acting too interested in the neighbors' cows. MUST HAVE ELECTRIC FENCE!

What to do?

Finally, a sane thought: call the company I bought the energizer from.

- Thanks to the receptionist for recognizing panic in my voice.
- Thanks to Sara for patiently walking me through testing the components and reminding me to hold the tester by the rubber, not the metal ground.
- Thanks also to the steer that came up with the rest of the cattle to see what I was doing. He very clearly touched his nose to the polywire and proved that while my tester might not be registering it, there was definitively electricity flowing through the fence.
- Thanks again to Sara for assuring me that it would keep the bull at home. LOL
- Thanks also to Gary for calling me back in such a timely manner.

The rest of the morning was spent working on reinforcing the electric fence with the new 72 inch stirrup posts; walking the fence line checking for breaks/grounding; removing polywire and posts no longer needed.

Oy vey. I am so sore. Certainly got my workout today. I will be happy to see Gary take these tasks over.

**December 13 (Saturday):** Another eventful day, dagnabit!

Woke to gunfire (this is after going back to bed having let the chickens out of the Eggmobile at dawn); which is not all that unusual, unfortunately. Couple that with not being able to see any of the cattle and Phaerghus barking like crazy when I let him out and now you have the start of my day.

First, I went looking for cattle and found them all together in a low area close to the west fence between the ponds. Smart animals.

It appears that the owner of the land east of ours is having a shooting party today. I saw a bunch of people wearing neon orange walking in a sort of line following several dogs. Not being a game hunter, I am assuming they are flushing pheasants and or quail.

So, I approached the east fence to find out and flushed a pheasant myself. Luckily no one shot in my direction... they were past me. I tried to get someone's attention and was unsuccessful.

If it weren't for having opened the section of pasture along the east fence yesterday evening for today's allotment of grass, this whole thing wouldn't be a big deal, but the gunfire is keeping the cattle away from the area and they are hungry.

Around noon, all the vehicles left and I hoped the event was over, but it only broke for lunch... nevertheless the cattle chowed down while they had the chance.

I tried to find out if this is a one day thing or two, but couldn't catch anyone...they really move along.

I ended up changing the order I am opening the stockpiled pasture so today and tomorrow the cows' grass is closest to the ponds.

Long story, sorry. What would have been nice, would be a heads up from the organizer so I could adjust things ahead of time. What has happened to common courtesy?

**December 15 (Monday):** Well, Sunday turned out to be a quiet day followed by a lovely rainy night and a warmish, drizzling day.

I decided to open the next section tonight so I wouldn't have to in the morning. I turned off the electricity and as I walked to the pasture I could see a gap between the gate and the fence. OH NO! It was OPEN! Of course, the cattle saw me coming and headed to the gate to meet me. Luckily, I got there first. I counted the cattle and everybody was inside the pasture.

Next I had to figure out why the gate was open and how was I going to secure it. The "U" nail that was attaching the chain to the post had disappeared. Thankfully, Gary left the smaller chain with a snap which he uses sometimes to hold the gate open hanging next to the gate on the fence.

I wrapped the small chain around the post and snapped the larger chain to it. This let me use the big chain with it's hook the same way we usually do to keep the gate closed. Phew.

Unfortunately, this gathering at the gate meant that the cattle were in my way (but that turned out to not be a problem). I confidently walked through them and glanced back to see how closely they were following me. All went well, except Fernie was in the lead for a change and was impatient for me to loosen the polywire.



I have a busy guardian angel who had me glance up just in time to see that big head start its “I’m going to butt you” motion. I growled a great big “Uhn-uh, NO” and he (and the rest of the cattle) jumped back, big time.

A moment later I had the polywire loose and everybody forgot about me completely. Which is great since I had to put it up in the same section on the far side.

What to do about the gate? I made a couple of adjustments to the quick fix and inserted several temp posts along the outside (the gate opens inward). Still nervous, I went and got a long bungee to wrap around both post and fence.

I certainly hope I have no reason to tell another long story anytime soon. LOL

**December 18 (Thursday):** About 2 inches of snow over night and it is still coming down.

Cattle satisfied with their pumpkins and fresh area of pasture.

Chickens are cranky...mostly hanging out under the Eggmobile, although some have made their way into the ShelterLogic.

Of course, today the polywire being removed in the cattle pasture decided to get thoroughly tangled. Took an extra hour, but I arose victorious.

## **IN CLOSING**

I must confess something. I did not tell you in the December 18 posting how extremely nervous I was about the forecast of snow. The hubby had planned to move some hay bales from the ‘hay house’ (which is a really big tarp over the pile of bales on pallets) to the smaller ShelterLogic Shed (which had been storing the large Jack-o-lantern pumpkins)... but he did not get around to doing so before he left. I did not know how to go about removing hay from the hay house without accidentally releasing the tarp. I had visions of all that hay being left to the weather and getting ruined.

This was when I discovered the hubby’s back-up had holiday plans... he was on his way out of town when I called to ask him to pull out some hay for me. Man, oh man! did the hubby get an earful during his daily call home. Thankfully, the snow was not so deep that the cattle couldn’t find the grass and the snow melted the next day. The moral (if there is a moral) is to be prepared for any eventuality to occur. A farm is NOT a place where procrastination is OK.

## **THE HERD IN WINTER (DECEMBER 2014)**

One thing I see that I haven’t discussed is water during the winter. Usually on a separate webpage, I’m including it here for your convenience.

## **OVERWINTER CATTLE WATER SETUP**

Since any water that is not artificially heated will freeze (in the trough and in the hose), it is necessary to make a winter water location that the cattle can get to that is also close to an electricity source.

The hubby puts the trough by the gate between the east and west pastures. He creates an ‘no cow zone’ on the water side of the gate using electric polywire so that we can open the gate and go into the area while keeping the cattle out of it and away from the electric stuff. It is nice to not have to worry about cows rushing you as you go through the gate... they stay on their side of the electric polywire.

The reason we put the gate between the pastures where it is in the first place has to do with the close proximity to the field hydrant and the garage (with electricity). It really does help to pre-plan when setting up your farm.

In the winter of 2013/2014 our field hydrant decided to stop working. Luckily it was closer to Spring than not and we only had to carry water from the house to the chickens for a few weeks. The stop-gap for the cattle was to use the hose from the field hydrant on the northwest corner of the west pasture (about 350 feet); which meant clearing the multiple lengths of hose each time to avoid ice freezing inside it. (It was a pain in the tookus.)



The most irritating thing about this is that the hubby had replaced the old field hydrant in the fall to keep this from happening. Once the ground thawed, he dug out the hydrant and determined that the problem was NOT in the pipe, but in the hydrant itself. He contacted the manufacturer of the new field hydrant and they were aware of the problem. They sent replacement parts and he got it fixed in a jiffy. We had NO problems with it during the winter of 2014/2015 (YIPPEE!).

The photo at rights shows the 2013/2014 cattle trough setup.

Last year, the heavy duty outdoor extension cord came through the north (meaning closest) window which let snow drift into the garage. This year, he took advantage of the hole under the west side at the north end created by rabbits. It worked quite well.

Thank you, rabbits!



A second outdoor extension cord with a 3-plug end meets the long one that plugs in inside the garage and we used a pig-tail post to hold them up off the ground (looping the cord through and around the pig-tail). We need the 3-plug end because in addition to the water heater, the inverter for the polywire is also plugged into it. During the winter, we can't rely on batteries because of the cold. The inverter uses a transformer which is not rated for outdoor exposure, so we concocted a "house" for it using a section of large diameter pipe (only about 6 inches long) covered by a plastic "bag" that is cable tied on both sides of the pipe around the cords. This worked really well. When we needed to unplug the polywire, we simply did so where the two (2) extension cords met since we never needed it unplugged long enough for the water to get cold enough to freeze. Last year, the water heater was rated at 1000W and was really more than we needed for the 100 gallon trough we use.

We removed the hose and auto stop feature soon after taking that photo. It left water in the hose which froze solid.



The photo at left shows the 2014/2015 setup.

This year, our friend Eric Butler was kind enough to spray closed cell foam on the outside of one of our 100 gallon troughs (he is the guy who did the insulation on the house). Between the insulation around the trough and the 2 inch closed cell foam board that the hubby set the trough on, there was even LESS need for that big water heater. So the hubby found a 500W version that worked just fine (and saved us some money on electricity). He had planned to put an insulated cover over half of the trough (the

polywire goes over the trough to keep the cattle away from the electric plug and heater, so the cattle don't surround the trough and basically take turns drinking from one end), but didn't quite get around to it. We think we can go to a 250V water heater when we put a partial cover on the trough next year... I'll let you know how that goes. (UPDATE December 2015: The 250V works great even without a cover!)



## FALL ROTATIONAL GRAZING

I found some photos from the fall rotational grazing season.

This is October 2014, that is Vickie (the heifer calf) nursing on Nike (her momma). Wow, that grass sure is green! The hubby had to go to a 3-strand polywire on the outside edges of the section divided into daily strips. Fernie (the bull) became way TOO interested in the neighbor's cows. You have probably already seen that story; if not, it is several pages back.



These are the two (2) calves in October 2014: Vickie on the left and Fillet Mignon on the right. Fil is one-month older than Vickie... they are much bigger now (April 2015) but Fil is still substantially larger than Vickie.

Below is the whole family busily cutting the grass.

We have gotten into the habit of counting the white belts to be sure that everyone is where they should be. (Button and Nike are always where they should be, thankfully.)



Also mentioned in previous years, I glean jack-o-lantern pumpkins from various businesses and organizations after Halloween and the cattle (and chickens) enjoy munching them for as long as they last.

Here is the herd in the east pasture to the north of the pond. That would be November 2014. The polywire kept them away from the bee-hive and the hay house.



## WINTER 'OPEN' GRAZING

Once the ground freezes, the cattle are allowed large areas to graze. This is because there is no danger of overgrazing due to the plants having sent their energy into their roots to wait until Spring. As I may have mentioned before, the plant above ground cures (dries) in place and is basically standing hay.

This is the hay house. We don't have a hay barn so this VERY LARGE tarp covers the 230+ square bales of our hay. The hay is stacked on top of pallets to get it off the ground.

I love how the hubby used T-posts and bungee cords to create the "porch" on the south side so he could easily get in to remove hay without having to tie and untie the baling twine that secures the tarp to the pallets. This photo was taken after about 1/8 of the bales had been removed. For a better perspective, those are 6 foot T-posts.



We didn't start giving hay until mid December. They had the "standing hay" grass until then in addition to pumpkins.

Here are the ladies sharing part of a bale with a steer. Vickie, the heifer calf is that reddish stuff behind Nike (on the right).

They had been moved to the south section of the east pasture by this time.

Here is Fernie hogging a whole portion of hay to himself and yet allowing his son, Fil, to munch next to him.

Fil is four (4) months old in this photo. He was still nursing regularly but loved finding tidbits to chew as well.



Lastly, here are the other two (2) steers. The one in the back appears red because his hair is bleached out more than the others.

I love this picture! Everyone is chewing their cud. It's not true that cows only lay down when it's going to rain. They spend about eight (8) hours a day chewing cud.

Fernie is off by himself in the upper right of this photo. He is wanting to visit the neighbor's girls. No way, bud!



I should also tell you that this area is the alley that goes up to the watering area. They have plenty of room, as you can see. The cattle get nice exercise making their way up the hill to the water and minerals. And because the soil is frozen, they aren't creating any problems walking up there a couple times a day. They do tend to go all together for water since it's at the other end of the pasture from where they were in the photos above.