

# PLAYHAVEN FARM & GREEN BUILDING PROJECT



## **Greetings Friends of PlayHaven Farm LLC (and the Green Building Project)!**

Today is February 6, 2013 and we hope 2013 finds you well. This is our first newsletter; please forgive us if we cover some things you already know. We don't want to assume that everyone has time to keep up-to-date with the information on the website; so, it's a bit long this first time out.

### **PLAYHAVEN FARM LLC**

Yes, you do see 'LLC' at the end of the farm name. Since we are serious about turning this venture into a profitable one, we took the plunge and turned it into a Limited Liability Corporation.

### **WEBSITE**

We added another domain name to point at the website (to make it easier to find); so you can get to it by using either: [www.PlayHavenGreen.com](http://www.PlayHavenGreen.com) (the original) OR [www.PlayHavenFarm.com](http://www.PlayHavenFarm.com).

The primary focus of the website currently is on farming because the Green Renovation has slowed due to the necessary investments to change from 'stewards of the land' to 'sustainable farmers.' We hope to be able to do at least some small renovations in 2013; time, money and sponsorships will tell.

We have a page on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/PlayHavenFarm> (PLEASE "LIKE" US ON FACEBOOK) which makes it easy to let you know when we've updated the website or if anything fun has happened. We also share other people's posts if they are good ideas, inspiring, etc.

Looking back over the last couple years, it is apparent that the website needs to be revamped and Bobbi is working on that... so expect to see some major changes in the next couple of months.

### **PASTURED POULTRY**

***What is 'Pastured Poultry'?*** That is an excellent question and I am SO happy you asked!

Pastured Poultry is a concise phrase used to describe chickens that are raised in a pasture setting as opposed to a chicken yard or confinement house. They may live in a small structure that is open to the ground (no wire under their feet) that is moved once or twice a day so the birds are always on fresh grass. OR they may have a mobile coop (where they can go to roost [and (if they are hens, lay eggs)] and take refuge at night which is surrounded by an electric net-type fence that allows the chickens to truly range freely and stay protected from predators; all of which is moved to provide fresh grass as needed.

These chickens feed primarily on the bounty of nature in the form of insects and plants; additionally they are provided with fresh water, feed and mineral (et al) supplements to cover what may be lacking in that particular spot on that particular day.

## ***Why not call them 'Free-Range Chickens'?*** Another excellent question!

What I (and probably, you) envision when the phrase 'free-range chickens' is presented is a bucolic landscape where chickens run around on green grass chasing bugs and enjoy the bright sunshine. Unfortunately, anyone (including confinement house production) following the technical definition as regulated by the USDA (which calls for the chicken to be "allowed access to the outside") is able to use the phrase 'free-range chickens.' It makes knowing the farm from whence you get your food even more important. We have a neighbor who advertises their eggs are from free-range chickens when, in fact, their chickens live in a chicken yard... a fenced in stationary coop with a very small area that is completely dirt.

We don't want there to be any confusion about how our chickens live, so we opt to not use that phrase.

## **COOPS**

We raise our chickens sustainably; which means they live on pasture and are not kept in a building or in a dirt yard.

The **hens** have a Mobile Coop surrounded by an electric net-type fence that allows the chickens to truly range freely and stay protected from predators.

The **meat birds** have a Chicken Tractor which is a small structure that is open to the ground (no wire under their feet) that is moved once a day so the birds are always able to sleep on fresh grass; it, too, is surrounded by an electric net-type fence that allows the chickens to truly range freely and stay protected from predators.

Both of these structures include a pop-hole (a chicken-size doorway) that we close after the chickens put themselves to bed at night and open first thing in the morning; providing extra protection.

While providing the chickens with a lifestyle that is both 'chicken-like' and safe for them... we are also thinking about the fertility of the soil in our pastures. All that scratching, removing insects and pooping improves the pastures *without the problems* associated with over use... which are toxicity from the high potassium content in chicken poop, denuding the soil and irritability among the chickens (pecking).

## **BREEDS - TRIPLE PURPOSE**

Our chickens are both farm help (improving the soil) and food producers (eggs and chicken meat). In the chicken industry, the term 'dual purpose' means good for egg production and meat, so I guess you could say that our chickens are 'triple purpose.'

We decided to forego the commercial breeds and chose instead Heritage Breeds. We did a great deal of research, visited the [America Livestock Breeds Conservancy](#) and decided that the breeds which fit best for us are:

### *Hens:*

- Black Australorps
- Light Brahmas
- Buff Orpingtons

These girls are heavy, dual-purpose birds who lay brown eggs and are especially hardy for cold weather.

### *Meat:*

- Dark Cornish

We order only cockerels so that we end up with bigger meat birds. We decided against getting the popular Rock/Cornish Hybrid that seems to be the staple for broilers because they grow abnormally fast and tend to have health issues. So instead of an 8-week turn over with the Hybrid (4 weeks in the chick brooder and 4 weeks on pasture), our Dark Cornish cockerels will spend 4 weeks in the chick brooder and 12 weeks on pasture. This extra time and the fact that they are less confined make their meat more dense and flavorful. ***It is important to cook Heritage Breeds correctly to get the best results; a PDF***

**from the ALBC on how to do this is attached.** We also like that the Dark Cornish are a truly balanced bird... not overly heavy in the breast meat. Their breast meat may not be as plentiful as the Hybrid, but we find that it is very juicy and very flavorful.

## FOOD (FEED)

Raising chickens on pasture does not mean (unfortunately) that you don't also have to provide them with food (or 'feed' as it is commonly known). Our chickens eat insects, some grass and some sand/soil from the pasture and we supply them with small grains, mineral supplements and lots and lots of fresh water.

Most (if not all) mainstream chicken feed uses cracked corn as its primary ingredient. As you may or may not already know, I (Bobbi) am allergic to corn products of all types... even baking soda plays havoc with my digestive system. And, I have discovered that eggs produced by hens fed a primarily corn feed also give me problems. Lately I've been calling myself the 'Canary in the Corn Mine,' LOL. (For anyone who doesn't get the joke, it refers to the early days of coal mining when the miners would take a singing canary into the mines with them to detect poisonous gasses. Because it took very little of the gasses to kill the bird, if it stopped singing, the miners would have time to evacuate and then deal with the gasses before it killed them as well.

It is my opinion that many people with egg allergies may actually be reacting to the corn feed, but there is no proof of that (as far as I know). I eat the eggs from my pasture raised hens and have absolutely NO problem with them in any way.

All that information is provided to explain that we feed our hens (and cockerels) **no corn, soy or wheat products**. That means our costs for feed are about double what we would otherwise pay. You get what you pay for and we are getting and providing high quality, healthy eggs and chicken meat.

## HOW TO BUY PLAYHAVEN FARM EGGS AND/OR CHICKEN

### EGGS

You can buy eggs at **\$3.00\*/dozen** (as of January 29, 2013) by getting on the Eggs List. Do this by emailing Bobbi and include your name, phone number, and city in the email. Use this address: [bobbi@playhavengreen.com](mailto:bobbi@playhavengreen.com).

Because we have more demand than eggs (due to it being winter), the person at the top of the list gets the next dozen eggs and the next name in the rotation moves to the top. Spring will increase the rate at which the ladies lay, so we should be able to ease up on the one dozer per customer limit. We have ordered more pullets and hope to ramp up production in the fall of 2013 so that the lag time drops off tremendously even in the winter. *Our customers tell us that these eggs are worth the wait!*

\*Bobbi goes into the KC area once a week and can deliver your eggs to a Missouri location. OR you can make an appointment to come out to the farm to get your eggs and pay only \$2.50/dozen.

### MEAT BIRDS

Meat chickens are ONLY sold through subscription/pre-orders at **\$20.00/chicken** and **orders must be received prior to March 1, 2013**. The deadline is only a couple weeks away and we did that to encourage you to NOT DELAY your decision making. We understand that most people are not used to ordering their meat several months prior to receiving it and especially not enough for an entire year. We also understand that for most people, a \$20.00 chicken is a luxurious expense, so maybe you'll want to start off by making a special chicken dinner once a month and only order 12 the first year. You can assume that your chickens will be close to four (4) pounds after processing. Now if you consider that one chicken yields six (6) entrée pieces (2 legs, 2 thighs, 2 breast) and the rest can be used as chopped meat in a casserole or other entrée; you could get two (2) meals easily from one (1) chicken.

Please use the attached order form and remember to let us know if you will want your birds live or processed (and if you want the giblets: heart, liver, gizzard).

In 2013, we will run two (2) batches four (4) weeks apart.\* Remember, you are ordering a live chicken and we will process it for you at no additional charge. We will let you know when we will be processing your chicken(s) and you are welcome to come to the farm to help if you like. Otherwise, we will provide you with the pick-up date to come to the farm and get your chickens. If you prefer to take your chickens home live, you will need to let us know so we have them waiting for you and you will need to provide transportation containment yourself.

FYI: By placing an order for meat birds, you are agreeing to come out to the farm on the pick-up-date. We cannot store your processed or live birds beyond that date. Once you have tasted this chicken, I'm sure you won't have a problem on that score. We project that processing/pick-up for the first batch will be the end of August; the second batch the end of September.

Remember, meat chickens are available ONLY by pre-order and if you only get one (1) or two (2) this year, you will have to wait until February 2014 to order again... regardless of how delicious those one (1) or two (2) were and how much you wish you had ordered more. (I, for one, am ordering 75 for myself so I can vacuum-pack and freeze them fresh and have great tasting chicken for the entire year.)

\*If the pre-orders justify it, we can add another batch four (4) weeks later.

## **HONEYBEES**

As most of you know, we started a honeybee hive in 2012. We knew we would not have honey to sell from that first year, but expected to have some in 2013. Unfortunately, our first hive died during the winter so we are starting from scratch in the spring of 2013. Well, not exactly from scratch, Gary is determined to start again with two (2) hives of bees that are especially hardy and hygienic. We don't know if we'll have honey next fall, but if we do and if you are interested, we will let you know. Please note your interest in honey on the order form, or send an email to Bobbi. Use this address: [bobbi@playhavengreen.com](mailto:bobbi@playhavengreen.com).

## **CATTLE**

If you have been following us on Facebook, you know about the guest cattle we've had. We are starting our own little herd this year with a Galloway bull-calf and two heifer-calves (breed yet to be determined). We won't have beef for a couple of years, but wanted to give you a 'heads-up' about it. This is a dual purpose breed (meat and milk) that excels on grass and produces excellent meat without having to 'fatten' them on grain.

We do not plan to sell raw milk. That is a tricky thing to do because of lots of regulations in the milk industry. However, we do plan to train one of the cows to be milked so we can have milk for ourselves. That means we may have too much for the two of us from time to time and we would be willing to share it with our friends when that occurs. If it does become possible to sell it easily, we will revisit that option at that time. Of course, this won't be an issue for the first couple of years anyway, but please note your interest in extra milk on the order form, or send an email to Bobbi. Use this address: [bobbi@playhavengreen.com](mailto:bobbi@playhavengreen.com).

## **BLACKBERRIES**

Gary's native blackberry plants produced about 10 gallons in 2012 in spite of the drought. We are hoping to get as many (or more) in 2013. We have not determined a price for them at this point. Please note your interest in blackberries on the order form, or send an email to Bobbi. Use this address: [bobbi@playhavengreen.com](mailto:bobbi@playhavengreen.com).

## **SWEET POTATOES**

We have ordered sweet potato slips again this year... organic Beauregard variety (orange flesh). They should arrive the first week in June. If you would like to purchase slips, they are **25 cents each (\$0.25)**. Please use the attached order form, or send an email to Bobbi. Use this address: [bobbi@playhavengreen.com](mailto:bobbi@playhavengreen.com).

We won't be irrigating our sweet potato plants, so hopefully the summer will cooperate and provide a bountiful harvest this fall. Prices will be determined closer to harvest. Please note your interest in sweet potatoes on the order form, or send an email to Bobbi. Use this address: [bobbi@playhavengreen.com](mailto:bobbi@playhavengreen.com).

## **PUMPKINS**

One of the very large pumpkins I purchased for fall decorating turned out to have exceptionally thick, fibrous flesh; so I saved the seed to plant this year. Assuming it was not a hybrid, we should have a plot of big, fleshy pumpkins to sell in the fall. (The ladies really enjoyed eating that pumpkin, by the way.) Please note your interest in pumpkins on the order form, or send an email to Bobbi. Use this address: [bobbi@playhavengreen.com](mailto:bobbi@playhavengreen.com).

## **EVENTS, TOURS, FUN ON THE FARM**

We plan to have several opportunities for our friends/clients to come out to the farm this year... a 'Meet Your Meat' party, is just one of our ideas.

It has been suggested to us that most people (especially under the age of 70) have never experienced farming the way we are doing it, so we are open to hosting field trips on an appointment basis. If you know of any teachers who would be interested in bringing out their class (for example), have them contact Bobbi at this address: [bobbi@playhavengreen.com](mailto:bobbi@playhavengreen.com).

As we become experienced with livestock, fruit and vegetable production, etc. OR as we host mentors to teach us, we will host workshops on a variety of topics. Anyone following our journey via the web-site will be learning what we learn. Anyone who wants to come out from time to time and get their hands dirty and learn with us first-hand is welcome!

## **IN CONCLUSION**

At the risk of sounding condescending, we know how easy it is to delay. Truthfully we fear everyone setting aside this newsletter and forgetting about it. Please don't.

We welcome suggestions for vegetables to grow, varieties of fruit trees, etc. The more we know about what you like to eat, the more likely we will be able to provide it in the future.

As we close this letter (a milestone for us), we again extend heartfelt appreciation for your interest in our pursuits and sustainable farming methods. If you have never been here to see firsthand what we are doing, please arrange for a tour.

If you have any questions about any of these items, or if you have suggestions and certainly if you have orders (LOL), we are as close as your email and your telephone. FYI: We do not 'text'; we prefer vocal communication via telephone and written communication via email.

Also, if (in the future) you prefer to receive the Newsletter and Order Form through the U.S. Postal Service instead of email, please let us know. We will be happy to provide it that way and will include a self-addressed, stamped envelope to make returning the filled in Order Form easy for you.

We deeply appreciate the blessings we receive – among which is the opportunity to live on this glorious place we call Earth, surrounded by and dependent on the miracle that is nature – and we appreciate your support and friendship.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

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