



Farm News - August

For the past fourteen years I have shared our home and farm with over two hundred volunteers from the WWOOF program (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms). The ages have ranged from 16 to 67 years. Although most are university students, I've also had two lawyers, a surgeon, a John Deere mechanic, a navigational engineer, 2 Waldorf teachers.... the list goes on. From New Zealand to Iceland to South Africa, with the average stay of 3 weeks, we've shared all kinds of meals from all levels of cooking skills. This past month of August was the culinary highlight though. Emile from France stayed for 3 months - mmm, French cuisine. Kozue from Japan, mmm, Japanese cuisine. Yunshu from China has dreams of opening his own restaurant, mmm, Chinese. Then Phillipp and Sita arrived from Germany, professionals from a Swiss "Five Star" hotel. Few restaurants could offer the level of cooking that came from our humble farm kitchen. After a memorable month of fine dining, all have now moved on, leaving me to fend for myself, and hopefully work off some new pounds.

The "rebel rooster" that escaped the trip to the processing plant has decided we are not such bad company after all. After weeks of surviving in the wilds of Goodfare, the wayward chicken has moved in next to the house. Now that I've had a closer look at the free spirited chicken I've had to ask, "what made me think it was a rooster?" The boldness to be different and escape? The ability to fend off predators and survive in the wild? The confidence to live alone rather than become submissive to the two yard roosters? The "rebel rooster" ended up being a hen.

My 300 turkeys have had a good summer. Farmers who raise turkeys often describe them as "birds just looking for a way to die". They are very sensitive when they are young and losses of 5% in one day are not uncommon. For some reason, I have a lot of luck raising turkeys and this year has been exceptional. With almost no mortality, the birds seem really calm and laid back. The reason? Good genetics? Free range? Organic food? Stress free living? My theory is growing up listening to CKUA radio - cultured turkeys.

Life can get pretty exciting when you live on a farm with animals, especially bison. Twice a year I have to move my herd of bison cows and calves, along with my two bulls down a long alleyway through the bush, across a creek to their next pasture. This year the beavers had dammed the creek which meant the bison would have to jump in and swim across. I opened the gate to the alley and called the herd, "Moostoos, Totonka, Astum!" Then to prove the gate was open, I went walking down the narrow alley. With the heavy bush on either side, I was not able to see if they were coming, it was so quiet, but suddenly I heard them. My thoughts immediately flashed to my friend Larissa Helbig who just one month ago was airlifted to hospital after being trampled by her bison. I dove under the fence (just 4 smooth wires) and laid there as the bison went thundering past me. But would they turn around when they got to the water? I heard the first splash and soon they were all in the water. Then their hooves hit dry land the thundering faded into the distance. Quiet. Another day on the farm. Jerry