



Down on the farm

Maple K Farms

Colfax, Washington

VOLUME 10 ISSUE 1

2015

**Special points
of interest:**

**Come visit
us on the
farm!**

**Please call be-
fore you visit to
make sure we
are here to
show you
around.**

509-397-4589

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Meyers Barn	2
Pastures Connected	2
Deer Season	2
Chicks	3
Farm Tours	3
Springs	3
Smoke & Mir- rors	4
Telling Tales	4
Cattle Sale	5
Wagons Ho	5

Forever And Ever

After almost two years of discussions and planning, we have entered into a Conservation Easement with the Palouse Land Trust on behalf of the Pullman/Moscow Regional Airport.

After much discussion between Cheryl and I, we decided to move forward because this project would allow the re-



maintained as a natural area with no building allowed in perpetuity. The project will be a beautiful view shed from the county road and a wildlife habitat like no other area around. There are twelve partner groups

What does this mean? Well, about two years ago Cheryl and I were approached by an engineering firm doing work for the Pullman-Moscow Airport. The airport is/ doing some major work and needed to move a small creek. The airport needed to create and enhance almost 114 acres to mitigate the effects of moving the creek. They had been looking for a large enough tract of land that met the specific criteria for 18 months and had not been successful. This is when they approached us regarding the back side of the Meyers Place which is timber and riverine bottom land along the South Fork of the Palouse River.



planting and enhancement of the area that had burned just prior to our purchase of the property. What will be the outcome of all of this? There were about 19 thousand stems planted, all of which are native to the area, an eight acre wetland will be created and 9500 feet of the South Fork of the Palouse River restored. Because of the Conservation Easement, the area will be

involved in the project and it is required to have an eighty percent success rate at the end of 10 years. The project was completed on November 9 with the well installed, the trees and plants in the ground, and the drip irrigation system working. Mother Nature – the next step is in your hands. We will provide updates in the future as things begin to grow.



We Are Now Connected

The Meyers Barn

The barn at the Meyers place continues to transform. Tom has added more sheltered area to the back of the barn in order to allow us



to park more equipment under cover. In addition, we've added a weather vane. It only seemed appropriate that the bird on the vane be a California quail since they populate the farm and are such fun to watch. The little birds tell us which way the



wind is blowing in fair weather or foul (fowl.....).



Usually in today's world this statement would refer to the internet or some level of tech hook-up but in the world of



cattle it means, fencing. Fencing is a big job and after more than 7 years the whole pasture system is now connected at the Meyer's Place. When we initially started using the pastures, there were

basically two pastures with fences in terrible disrepair or non-existent. Now, after careful planning, a lot of work, and the development of the water system, ten separate paddocks (pasture areas) are in use. The plan is to build/divide five more in the future. Some of this fencing and water development was done on our own and some was done with the cooperation of the Whitman Conservation District through cost sharing. Coming up with an overall long term plan was one of the biggest challenges taking into consideration topography, water availability, creek location and the ability to get a post in the ground (solid bas-

alt in some cases), needed to be considered. The two that came online this spring, Apple Pie, and the Hayfield made the connection between the north and south sections which now enables us



to move the cattle through our entire pasture system rather than loading them into a trailer to move. This also lets us have better management of the different grasses and forage and the ability to manage the differences with regards to lush bottom ground versus rockier side hills.

To most, it is no big deal but to me it was really exciting to see the cattle step into an area that had not been grazed in over 50 years.

Well Deer ??? Not So Much



After seven years of exemplary white tail deer hunting, this year was a little different. The exceptionally dry year combined with the disease known as "blue

tongue" contributed to the reduction of deer on the property. The disease "blue tongue" is brought on during extremely dry periods when water sources are dried up and more deer congregate at fewer sources. There is a gnat that carries the disease that lives in and around the mud near these water sources and when they deer drink, they are bitten and the disease spreads leading to a high death toll.

Neither Cheryl nor myself were successful this year as well as no luck for the two boys hunting with the "Youth Outdoors Unlimited" group. That is why the sport is called hunting, not shooting. The only success was had by Ab-

bie and Chuck our daughter and son-in-law.

We still have deer on the property but it will be several years, I believe, before the numbers recover.



Chicks, Chicks, Chicks? In SEPTEMBER!!!



Usually chicks are something we deal with in late February or early March. We usually purchase a dozen or so baby chicks and brood them in the chicken house until they are ready to join the flock in 6 – 8 weeks. However, this year, the chickens decided to take matters into their own “wings”. We occasionally have a chicken or two that rather than lay her eggs in the nests in the chicken house will try to find some cozy out-of-the-way place to deposit her eggs. She isn’t interested in sitting on them so if we don’t

locate them every day we end up with surprise when one or more break due to age or damage. I know why they use a rotten egg smell to warn of a gas leak. Wow, what a powerful smell.

Tom has gotten pretty good at locating some of these secret hide-aways and we just check them daily to gather the eggs. However, one day in late September, he was headed out to do chores and heard one of the chickens using that special cackle they use to talk to chicks. Since the door to the chicken house hadn’t been opened for the day he wondered why he was hearing a chicken outside at all. He headed around to the far side of the barn and sure enough, there was one of our black chickens with a brood of 15 little chicks following along, as proud as could be.

You heard about Napoleon last year. We didn’t think he was viable as a rooster due to his size, but obviously we had been proven

wrong. Mother moved the entire brood into the chicken house and over the next few

months successfully raised them to good sized chickens except for one runt that looked a little weak from the beginning. After weeding out the 5 roosters from the group, we added 9 hens to our flock with no help from us. This mother was successful in finding the most secret nesting spot around and then sitting



down to finish the job.



wishing to see how we do things. We had a group from WSU Block and Bridle Club come to the farm to look at our operation and ask questions.

Again this year our efforts have been encouraged by others

Farm Tours

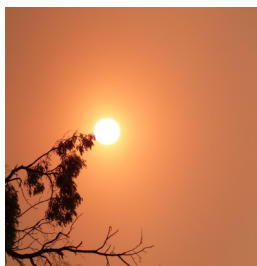
Some had extensive cattle background, others very little but the questions were all interesting and hopefully they left with a deeper understanding of what it takes to raise beef.

The other group was the state FFA officers. It was a fun day for this hardworking group to visit the farm for a little down time

after a week of workshops and presentations. They enjoyed the visit, a meal, and a little downtime.



Life Saving Springs



In the last newsletter we talked about the springs that were developed at the Meyers place. Well with the extremely dry weather this last summer

(no serious rain fall from June through the end of October), we heavily depended on these reliable sources of water again. When the Spring Flat creek dried up in mid-June instead of August, we knew it was going to be a long summer, but the springs kept flowing and we were able to use

the pastures all summer though it made for long walks for the cattle. One of those times when looking ahead to develop the resources really paid off.



Spring Flat Creek—July

Smoke & Mirrors

Sometimes it seems that that old saying applies to many aspects of farming but in this case it has a specific designation. With the passing of Elmo the Goat last year it quickly became obvious that Carmel was not going to do well as the "Lone Goat". She was never very personable (or nice to Elmo) but she definitely needed as pasture mate. Not looking to get into the business of raising goats we were not looking for a male and even a young whether didn't seem the best choice. We found a local women online that was reducing her herd of mixed breed goats and was willing to sell pet stock at a reasonable price for what would essentially be yard ornaments (with tremendous personality).

We went to see what she had. In the first pen she had two weanling goats, a sister and brother that were a cross between pigmy and angora goats. Cute as buttons, we planned to bring them home until Tom thought to check the male to make sure he had

been neutered. Much to the owner's chagrin, she hadn't been entirely successful in her attempt to render him neutered. Concerned that if we brought him home, we took the chance of raising young goats and not wanting to breed Carmel who is getting up there in years, we searched for another young female. In another pen we found a weaned but younger female, another cross but also on the pygmy size. After completing the business end of the arrangement and loading the youngsters in a very large dog kennel, we headed home.

We unloaded our new acquisitions in the goat pasture and Carmel was shocked. She initially tried mothering the two youngsters, but they were having none of it so for the first few hours, Carmel stayed in the small pen while the new additions had the run of the pasture. OOPS!! We forgot how small young goats are and for the first two weeks we would look out the windows or arrive home and find one or two small goats in the yard or barnyard happy as can be. Having start-



ed life in a rather small pen and being kept indoors much of their early days, they were enjoying this new freedom immensely.

After a couple weeks, they learned about electric fences and we plugged all the holes. Carmel was still being a stinker but the new additions seemed to be holding their own. As time has gone on they have both grown to match Carmel in size and now are a herd of three that travel together and loudly let us know when it is time for feeding.

As for Smoke and Mirrors, one of the new additions is the beautiful grey color of smoke and the other is shiny white like a mirror. So now we have Smoke, Mirrors and Carmel, three very colorful opinionated occupants of the front pasture.



Tell One on Yourself!

This spring, a copy of the KetchPen, the newsletter for the Washington Cattlemen's Association that covers various topics of interest to the industry and common concerns, did an article on cross-fencing and the development of springs for off-creek watering of cattle. Attached to the article were two pictures, one before and one after of an area of high cattle usage. After looking quickly at the

pictures and then reading the article, I told Cheryl, "There is someone who needed to work on separating the cattle from the area, but it looks like they were successful, because the photos were like night and day."

Upon closer inspection, I realized that the sign in the background of the second picture was one that I had made. So I decided that with non-biased revue of the pictures, I had done OK.



What a laugh that gave me. As an aside, the article was written by the director of our local conservation district and picked up by the KetchPen without my knowledge. Nice to know your efforts can be helpful to others even when you don't recognize your own work!

Cattle Sales

This past year we have had a number of inquiries about purchasing cattle. Some have been from people seriously interested in raising highlands either for their own use or to sell beef. Others have been from folks that like the looks but don't realize you need pastures, fences, feed, and transportation. In one case we had a couple from Juliaetta, ID that were seriously interested in raising cattle. They purchased two bred cows and a bull. We wish them all the best in their transition to raising and selling cattle.

In addition, we had a little more troubling sale to a young lady here in Colfax. Not because of any lack



of knowledge on her part (she is a vet tech) but because of the circumstances of the calf she bought. One of our best bred and most recognized (show prize) cows gave birth to a sweet heifer calf in late November. The calf was strong and quickly got to her feet but seemed to be frustrated in trying to feed. Mom, being the pro she is, tried to assist but we quickly realized something was amiss. Last year Fiona had had a bout of mastitis but still had milk on two teats. We didn't realize there was a problem until we got ready to wean last year's calf, which was a little small, but mom was already bred back, so we decided to let her have this last calf and hoped she could raise it.

Well, no such luck. We quickly realized the young lady's frustration was Mom had nothing for her. We brought them both into the corrals and got some store bought colostrum into our little girl. After we checked mom and found that she was producing no milk at all, we realized we had a bottle baby. The calf quickly took to the bottle and was an enthusiastic eater, but that meant a twice a day routine for a few weeks, months of feedings. Having done this in the past, we realized the time commitment involved if you wanted to raise

a healthy calf and not really looking to play mom, we began looking for someone interested in raising a bottle baby.

One of the calls went to our local vet's office to see if anyone had ever expressed an interest in raising a bottle baby or if they knew anyone to contact. Within hours one of the vet's assistants called expressing interest and asking all sorts of questions. She has experience with animals (owning a number of sheep, goats, etc.) and working at the vet's office, we knew she would get good advice. Needless to say, a deal was struck and that evening she and a friend arrived to take her new friend home. She was thrilled with our little girl and named her Nutmeg (a perfect description of her color). Nutmeg is doing well. We get updates on Facebook and look forward to watching her grow into the healthy young cow she is destined to be.



Wagons, Ho!

Early in 2015, we realized that we were going to need a vehicle to get around the farm ground and pastures for tours, fence work, traveling to the forest ground and general chores that could hold more than the one person (or two if you're daring) of a four wheeler and would be less hard on the ground than a pick up.

We went searching for a side-by-side to meet these needs and settled on a Honda Pioneer 700, a most unique vehicle. The Pioneer has seating for two in front like you would expect but beyond that it has a cargo space in the back. This cargo space is extremely versatile. It can carry load of 1500 lbs. of cargo which is helpful with fencing, firewood, feed, etc. This bed is also capable of hydraulically dumping said load so that cargo such as gravel doesn't have to be shoveled off.

However, the best part is in the bed of the cargo area are two seats that can be raised up for two additional passengers with seatbelts included. This allows us the opportunity to transport people (including grandchildren) to the forest at any time of the year. I realize this sounds like an advertisement for Honda, but it isn't often you find a vehicle that meets so many needs. We've put it to hard use since we've had it and couldn't be happier.



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