

May Be Farm Happenings

January 2020

Happenings on the Farm

A new year on the farm! January is a fun month spent pouring over catalogs and planning the upcoming year as well as reviewing what went well (and what didn't) the previous year.

So a quick look at what went well last year. We had an incredible crop of healthy lambs, the most lambs ever born on Mae Be Farm! It was exciting to see all the beautiful babies produced by my new ram Brugge. He really did a good job for us and I am looking forward to seeing what he produces this year.

On the other hand we ran out of hay before the grass started growing. It left me scrambling to find hay at the end of a hard winter. I ended up with 2 large 1 ton bales. That was a real adventure. They were loaded on the trailer for us but since I'd never handled bales that big before I didn't realize that even the whole family pushing couldn't get them off the trailer. So plan #2 was to feed off the bales until they were light enough to pull off the trailer. That was a great idea but (yes another plot twist) to get the rectangle bales on the trailer they had to be placed so they were taller than they were wide. This meant that for every flake of hay you pulled off the bale, the top half of the next flake fell down on your head. The bale was falling apart as it was fed and even with careful management it was too messy. I ended up with a huge trailer stored in my barn for awhile. That was a whole lot of fun since I had to climb over the trailer and walk down the fenders to feed and water the horse and pet. As far as things going wrong on the farm that was a pretty good one, inconvenient but not a huge disaster.

Continued on pg 5

On the Needles

I am busily preparing for my new Spin-A-Long *Spinning with Intent*. We will be meeting the second and fourth Saturdays of each month starting Saturday March 28th **Getting to know each other and our wheels**. The plan is for us to start at Super Bulky yarn and work our way down to true lace weight. The one Saturday will focus on spinning and the other Saturday we will be knitting with the yarn we spun. This will be a fun group of people getting together and working on our spinning and knitting. If you are interested in joining this free Spin-A-Long please email me at Rebeccasromneys@gmail.com for more information.

Winter Morning Headband our first project!



Sudoku

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2 | | 5 | | | 8 | 7 | 6 |
| 7 | | | 1 | 8 | | | 5 | |
| 8 | 5 | 9 | 7 | | | | 4 | |
| 5 | 9 | | | | 4 | 6 | 8 | 1 |
| | 1 | | | 3 | | | | |
| | | | 8 | 6 | | | 9 | 5 |
| 2 | | 7 | | | 8 | | | 9 |
| 9 | | 4 | | | 7 | 2 | | 8 |
| | | | | | 2 | 4 | 6 | |

All Riddled Up

A Farmer buys 100 animals for \$100. The animals include at least 1 cow, 1 pig, and 1 chicken, but no other kind. If a cow costs \$10, a pig costs \$3, and a chicken costs \$0.50, how many of each did he buy?



Laugh the New Year In

My Friend asked me where I see myself in the New Year. How should I know? I don't have 2020 vision.

What do you call a sleeping bull?

A bulldozer

What's a cow's favorite Holiday?

Moo Year's Eve

What did the farmer give his wife on New Year's Eve?

Hogs and kisses

January 2019

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|----------|---|----------|
| | | | 1 New Year's Day! | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 Full Moon | 11 |
| 12 Increase Ewes food | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19 | 20 Holiday | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 Prune Orchard | 28 Frost Seeding Starts | 29 | 30 | 31 Check Lambing Kit Crutch Ewes | |
| | | | | | | |

List of Events:

- February 1st Pre-lambing vaccinations for Ewes
- March 6th Lambing Starts
- March 21st Spring on the Farm – come visit the lambs!
- March 28th Spinning with Intent – Getting to know you 9-1 at DFA
- March 29th Shearing at Mae Be Farm

Lad's Barking News



Life on the farm can be pretty boring in the winter. I don't get to boss the sheep around because they all stay in their winter pen, eating. I'm told they are expecting babies soon and that will be a lot of fun. I really like babies but I have to be careful because some of the ewes don't like me sniffing their babies. My favorites are the orphan lambs who will play bounce and race with me.

Even though there isn't a lot of work to do I've been learning a new job. I guard the gate so my girl can carry hay to the feeders without having to stop and open and close gates. This can be a lot of fun! I get to stand at the gate and it isn't very long before a ewe decides that it's taking too long and she's going to help herself to the hay from the hay stack. Then I get to tell her she's being naughty! That's my favorite part! Sometimes I let a ewe through the gate just so I can boss her around. I get in trouble for it but I like bossing ewes around.

The rules are no sheep in the barn except for the old ewe, Sabby. She gets let out for special food but only at night! She tries to tell me she gets out in the morning too but I know better and make her stay in. I like to wait next to her and watch her and the gate. I'm good at multi-tasking! I have to keep reminding Sabby she can't go to the other end of the barn and look for chicken and cat food. Those are not good for her and she isn't allowed to eat them.



Lad by Sabby watching her and the gate.

While guarding the gate is fun, it's mostly standing waiting for the ewes to be naughty. So I'm not getting as much exercise. To keep me fit and handsome my girl has made me a special jungle gym all my own but I like her to play on it with me though. I have stairs up one hay stack, a bridge across to the other hay stack, stairs down and then a tunnel to run through. I keep trying to tell her that the tunnel is much more fun to go over though. I know that work comes first so I help feed the animals before playing on my jungle gym. It's a lot of fun! One day I discovered that a stupid hen had laid an egg right in my way. I wasn't happy and grumped until my girl came and took the egg away. Those hens should use their special nest boxes and leave my special gym alone. Running my own agility course is almost as much fun as bossing ewes around.



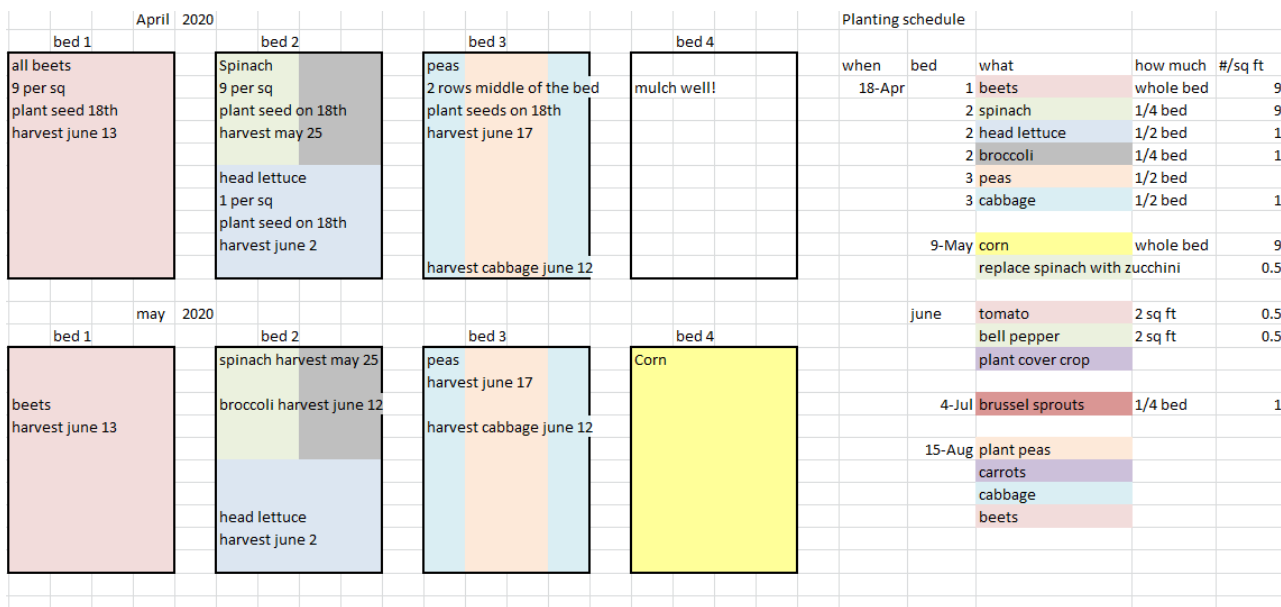
Lad by the bridge across they hay stacks

The Harvest

January is the best time to start pouring over the pretty pictures in the seed catalogues and start planning next year's garden. It takes a lot of consideration to decide what variety I want to plant. This year I want to do succession planting so variety is very important. One vegetable will be harvested and the next one will be planted. Once varieties are chosen I make a calendar like the one below. This helps me determine what to plant, where to plant it, and when to plant it. Of course its color coded.

This year the special varieties being planned are: a purple bell pepper (they were very tasty last year and produced well); multi colored carrots; bantam popcorn from a friend's farm; scarlet runner beans; as well as seed pumpkins. It should be a colorful year for us.

Assuming the weather behaves and we get enough water I should be overrun with vegetables all summer long. I can't wait!



Happenings on the Farm con't

Instead of New Year's resolutions I like to set goals for the farm. I find having a specific goal helps keep me motivated even when the going gets tough. So my goals for the farm this year are:

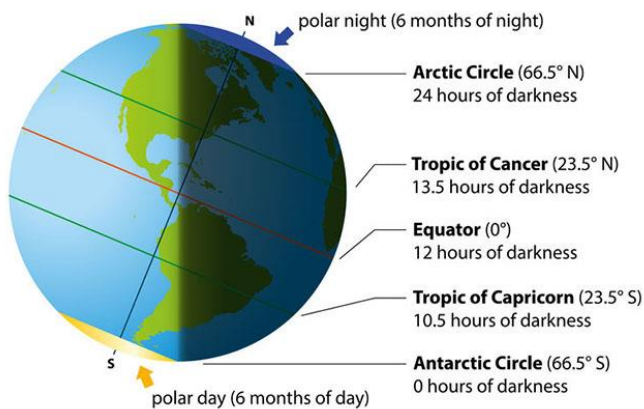
1. Publish Mae Be Farm Happenings once a month on the first non-holiday weekday of the month.
2. Take Lad to a herding class or seminar.
3. Create and keep to a garden plan calendar.
4. Knit 2 items a month.
5. Redesign my livestock pens to better match their use and implement the design.
6. Create a mobile shelter for the sheep that I can use in the pastures.

These are my big goals for the farm this year. Keep reading the newsletter to see what Mae Be Farm is doing this coming year!

Winter on the Farm

Winter officially started December 21st ! It always seems weird to me that it is so late in the year but the start of winter is officially determined by the solstice. The dictionary defines solstice as “either of the two times in the year, the summer solstice and the winter solstice, when the sun reaches its highest or lowest point in the sky at noon, marked by the longest and shortest days. So the winter solstice is always a happy day for me because I know that the days will be getting longer now and my time of feeding in the dark by flash light will soon come to an end. I defiantly won’t miss that. Counting sheep is hard enough but counting black sheep by flash light is a real challenge.

winter solstice (December 21)



They say that if you like winter you’ve never been a farmer and that’s somewhat true. Winter defiantly brings its challenges to a farm. Keeping drinking water liquid for the livestock is a big one. Thankfully we have invented electric heaters that will keep the water just above freezing. Sometimes though the power goes out or the silly horse flips them out of the water (which is a big cause of barn fires!) or they break down and suddenly you have ice. The winters here are pretty mild so I can generally use a shovel to break the ice but some places they have to chop a hole with a hatchet. Anyway you do it, it is still a lot of work and must be done at least twice a day. It’s vital that

the livestock get enough to drink during the winter. This is because they use the water to help move their feed (dried plants) through their digestive system. They use both the energy provided by the food and the process of digestion to generate heat to keep them warm. Without enough water their ability to move their dry feed would be compromised and they would be prone to cold stress, even with their amazing winter coats.

It is also important to increase their feed during cold weather since they need it as fuel for their internal fires. There actually is a calculation to tell you how much extra will be needed. Critical low temperature is 32°F. So if you were expecting your night time lows to be 32°F with a wind chill of -4 degrees you would end up with 28°F. Energy adjustment is 1% for every degree below 32°F so in this case your adjustment would be 28% and would feed them 128% of their daily ration. If you were feeding 4 lbs of hay per head of sheep before you would now be feeding 5.12 lbs.

This is doubly important here on Mae Be Farm since the majority of our animals are also pregnant so they have an additional nutritional demand on their system. This is an important time for the lamb’s development. The quantity and quality of the feed the ewe is given determines not only how healthy the lambs are at birth but also their wool quality, their nutritional needs, their size, and to a certain extent how much milk the ewe has for her lambs. Feeding correctly can make a world of difference for a shepherd in the spring when the lambs are born.

The ewes really start feeling the lamb’s need of extra feed about Christmas time and get really grouchy if their meals are late. Eating is a serious business and nothing gets between them and their dinner. Suddenly that huge hay stack that I worked so hard to put up in the summer isn’t looking big enough to last.

Winter also brings the need to muck the barn because the animals are housed in the barn and dry lots to allow the pastures to rest over the winter. It’s

not my favorite task but I love the resulting compost. You can almost hear the garden sing with joy when you fertilize with the barn cleanings. Each sheep produces about 4 lbs of manure a day (plus there's bedding) so you can imagine how much my little flock of 17 ewes produce. The math is a little scary. Thankfully I have a good spot to stack it all and let it compost down.

While winter does bring its challenges and a lot of work (usually involving a shovel) it does bring its joys. The days are quieter, the pace slows down. It maybe cold but that makes curling up with a blanket and a good book much more fun. The sun

may sleep in and go to bed early but it makes it easier to see the stars. I do enjoy winter, warts and all.



The ewes out enjoying a sunny winter's day



Lad and Rebecca on a hike



Lad watching over the elderly ewe Sabby



Knit Lamb Ornament