

# Mossback Farm News

May 2006

Vol. 4 No. 1



## Greetings from the farm!

With all the warm weather we've been having, it feels like summer is just around the corner! Winter was fairly uneventful, which was nice considering how busy the farm was last year. Between the addition of pigs and cattle, the broilers and layers, and our stalwart sheep flock, 2005 kept us on our toes.

Our Egg Drop CSA filled up early and we had supply problems later in the summer, due mostly to a coyote who took a liking to our hens. After the ravens discovered our spring broilers (and took off with about 1/4 of the flock), we cancelled our October batch and ended up just having broilers available in June and August. Our foray into pig raising was successful - we raised them for 4 months, despite numerous pig break-outs, and were able to get the pork to our customers in September. And we had our first lambing year, with 7 Katahdin lambs at the end. We gave away one "bummer" lamb that had to be bottle-fed, and we lost one of Mama Ewe's triplets. Our neighbors bottle-raised several Jersey steers and in June we welcomed two of them (Starsky and Hutch) to our farm.

Last year was the first that we had interns on the farm. Charlie was our first intern, and he was a wonderful animal caretaker. He was largely responsible for taking care of the pigs and our June chicken batch. He was an extremely talented pianist and it was nice having someone else around the house enjoying the piano and providing beautiful music. Norris was our intern from August to October and he was an amazing worker. He single-handedly (or maybe he used both hands) cleared over an acre of scotch broom from our farm! He also was fond of making blackberry cobblers from the berries growing wild on the farm. It was great having the assistance and companionship from the interns and we are looking forward to more interns this year.

An exciting farm development in 2005 was signing up for 2 USDA conservation programs. The Conservation Security Program (CSP) rewards farmers for sustainable farm practices such as water conservation, low-till farming, etc. The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is designed to promote riparian buffer zones. Through these programs, we're receiving financial assistance to do things like conducting an energy audit for the farm, installing cross fencing along our swales,

and planting over 3000 trees. This year so far we planted 1300 oaks, ashes, valley ponderosa pines, willows, and Douglas firs along our swales. (Well, actually Rich planted probably 1000 of the trees, and our good friends John and Rachel helped out with some planting as well!) We are really excited to be able to work on some of these projects that will bring long-term rewards to the farm.



## Mossback Farm Update – 2006 Plans



As many of you may already know, we are scaling back our product offerings this year. We are not doing the Egg Drop CSA or broiler chickens. There are many reasons for our decision – the primary one is that the increases in organic feed prices and in gasoline have made chicken-raising uneconomical for us this year. Also, with the specter of avian flu drawing nearer, we thought that this might be a good year to hold off on chickens. Over the winter we also decided not to raise pigs this year. We are still looking for a local source of organic feed for the pigs (since the organic pig feed is also extremely expensive and costly to haul), and are also working on better containment fences for the pigs..

So for 2006, our primary product will be lamb. (Our beef will be available in summer 2007, with a small chance of one being available this fall). We expect to have 5 lambs ready by August, and another 3 in October. More info on ordering the lamb is on page 2, so please check it out and contact us to place your reservation if you are interested.

**Mark your calendars now ...**

**Lamb!**

**Available in August and October**

**Annual Fall Work party on  
Saturday October 21st**

## Farm Musings: Local farming connections

by Val Blaha



We recently learned of two vegetable CSAs in Yamhill county. Gaining Ground farm, run by Mike and Jill Paine is just east of Yamhill. We visited their place a few weeks back and were impressed by the beauty of the land and by their hard work! They have a great website ([www.gaininggroundfarm.com](http://www.gaininggroundfarm.com)) and do deliver to Portland, so if you are interested in organic veggies, check them out.

Oakhill Organics is another CSA farm and is located in McMinnville. They recently moved here from Bellingham, WA. They also have a website ([www.oakhillorganics.org](http://www.oakhillorganics.org)) and are delivering to the McMinnville area. It is great to see more organic farmers starting up out here in our county!

Another local farm is Apifera Farm. They are just a couple miles from us, and they also raise Katahdin sheep. Katherine is an artist as well – if you are looking for fun farm art, check out her site at [www.apiferafarm.com](http://www.apiferafarm.com).



## Lamb available this year!

We are now taking orders for lamb. Last year the hanging weight ranged from 36 to 44 lbs. We are charging \$5/lb plus processing. We sell lamb by the half or whole lamb.

We'll have 5 lambs available in August and three more in October. You can talk with the butcher directly to specify cuts and package sizes (for example, whether you prefer 2 or 4 steaks per package, etc.) We will have some recommendations for cuts based on prior years' experience.

If you are interested, please contact us for more info, or send in your order form and deposit. Orders will be taken in the order received.

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**Remember to check out our "journal"  
on our web page at  
[www.mossbackfarm.com](http://www.mossbackfarm.com)  
for farm updates and photos!**



## Farm Visits!

Some other plans for the farm this year are working on the landscape design around the house, installing (finally!) the kiwi trellis, building a couple of livestock sheds, building an outdoor kitchen area for the intern trailer, clearing space for our pole barn (hopefully that will go in next year), and possibly rebuilding our back shed.

There certainly will be a ton of projects going on, so if you have a desire to come out to the farm and get your hands dirty, don't be shy!

Or, if you'd like to bring the kids and just see our animals and breath the fresh air, give us a call to schedule a tour as we welcome visitors. We still have about 15 hens, plus the sheep and steers so there's plenty for the kids to see.

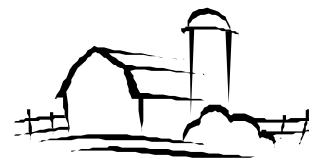
## Music, anyone?



And finally, Val is busy teaching music and is looking to perform as a pianist at weddings and parties this year. If you know of anyone looking for live music at their event, please send them to Val's website: [www.valblaha.com](http://www.valblaha.com).

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**Thanks for your continued support of our farm!**



**Val and Rich Blaha  
Mossback Farm, LLC**

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**(we don't receive mail at the farm, so please use the PO Box  
for all correspondence and payments)**

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