

Jimmy Acres: A Tommerdahl Family Farm

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Hello Friends and Neighbors!

If you've been paying attention, you may have noticed that we missed our monthly newsletter last month. Whew, summer is busy! June was admittedly a struggle with plants not producing as expected, unwanted furry visitors nibbling on the produce that we did have, and the weather being unpredictable as expected. But struggles with plant growth are a great opportunity for our growth, and we have definitely taken advantage of this opportunity. By no means do we now have all the answers (if anything, we're becoming evermore aware that we really know nothing at all), but we have found some new resources to learn from and are diving even deeper into the technical worlds of plant physiology, soil biology, and the elegant interactions between the two. We've implemented a few new techniques, possibly improved some issues, and are looking forward to even greater improvements and more learning in the future!

Some of the highlights from the past two months include:

- ♣ We hired two new employees who have very quickly found their niche on the farm and have already made a huge impact. Thanks to the Franklin County Paws for Life and Cats for Hire programs, Thelma-Lou (left) and Beatrix (aka Brix, right) have found their perfect jobs as apex predators in the garden. The number of nibbles on tomatoes has drastically decreased and we're super excited about the upcoming melon and sweet potato seasons. After very quickly figuring out the "cat door" to get over the garden fence, these two have started spending every evening happily exploring and lounging around in the garden, keeping Anna company, and letting the other critters know that they no longer have access to a full buffet of produce every night.



- ♣ The turkeys are here! After spending a few weeks in the brooder, we have put these guys to work out in the orchard where they are clearing weeds from around trees, eating bugs, and fertilizing the soil. Even with all the goodies to eat, they still go crazy over watermelons. Lance must have started taking a few lessons from Brie the cowdog because he's been a great help getting them back in their pen when the grass on the other side of the fence starts looking more inviting. Remember to place your pre-orders [HERE!](#)

- ♣ With the addition of irrigation and heavy mulching this summer, we are finally seeing some new growth in our blueberry patch this year. It turns out, and don't be too surprised by this, plants need water to grow! The next project is to get the water cycle running more effectively in the orchards—Mark and Chris are working on getting mulch spread and keeping trees watered and weeded through the lengthy dry spells of the summer.
- ♣ Thanks to all who have stopped by the farm stands so far this summer! In addition to our stands at the farm in Semora and at the Bowden Rd farm in Chapel Hill, Jake has also added a bi-weekly market at VF in Greensboro. It's been great getting to meet so many new people, catch up with our regulars, share our food with the community, and hear about all the delicious dishes y'all have made!



Taking a Step Towards Grazing and Grassfed

As we continue to expand the diversity in our farm ecosystem along with the diversity of the shopping experience at our farm stands, we are excited to announce that we are now offering Grassfed+Grassfinished Ground Beef! While our farm is not quite ready for cattle (we're still trying to find the time for fence and waterline installation), our new friends at Thistle Hill Farm in Hume, Virginia are helping us jumpstart this project.



During our trip to California for the Grassfed Exchange conference last April ([see link HERE for article about conference](#)), we met a fellow HERD scholarship recipient, Church Humphreys, who was from the Shenandoah Mountain area, just a few hours north of us. We were excited to meet another young farmer in the area who shared the same outlook and obsession with using farming practices to regenerate our soil, food systems, and natural landscapes. Last month, Anna and Jake visited Church's family's farm (Thistle Hill Farm) to learn more about their grazing practices and to sample their beef. We were impressed by the flavor of the meat, the quality of their pastures, and their focus on Red Devon genetics to breed ideal cattle for a grassfed, chemical-free environment. Church also practices low stress techniques as he rotates his cattle from pasture to pasture, holistically managing his fields.

Because Thistle Hill Farm's values and story aligned so closely with ours, we decided their beef would be a great fit for our farm stand. Not only will we be able to supply you all with delicious grassfed beef, but we will also be able to work with Church over the next few years to build our own herd using local genetics that are well suited for grazing on pastures in the south. We hope to transition from providing beef raised nearby to bringing you beef raised right here on our farm from cattle that are improving our own soils and watersheds as they graze within our ecosystem.

We look forward to you getting to taste this project along the way!

If you have any suggestions for things you'd like to see in future newsletters, or have any ideas for how we can improve our customer service or your produce-buying and -consuming experience, please let us know! And as always, please feel free to pass this along to all of your produce-loving friends and neighbors!

"A garden is a grand teacher. It teaches patience and careful watchfulness; it teaches industry and thrift; above all it teaches entire trust."

~Gertrude Jekyll~

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