

Jimmy Acres: A Tommerdahl Family Farm

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Hello Friends and Neighbors!

It feels like we were just welcoming in summer, but somehow it's already time to say hello to fall. The past few months have been a colorful blur of veggies moving from our plants to your plates. We've been excited about all the new people who have stopped by the farm stands this month and we're doing our best to keep things going into the fall! That being said, we may be altering farm stand hours as daylight hours start to shorten. Keep an eye out for future emails on this subject.

August brought us many new projects and inspirations on the farm. Here are just a few of the highlights:

- ♣ We recently became a "Farm Partner" with the [Real Food Campaign \(RFC\)](#), an organization working to illuminate the link between soil health and food health. By collecting soil and produce samples, this organization is quantifying this connection between soil and food nutrition. Additionally, with this data, the RFC has developed and is currently calibrating a handheld Bionutrient Meter—a device developed in collaboration with the [Bionutrient Food Association](#) as a way for consumers to quantify nutrient quality and to subsequently know precisely what their food dollars are paying for. We'll keep you updated on what we find out about our produce!
- ♣ Two new batches of chickens joined the farm in August. This round, we're raising a test batch of the Freedom Ranger breed along with a larger batch of the Cornish Cross breed that we raised last spring. The Freedom Rangers are slightly slower growing but are better foragers than the Cornish Cross. We're excited to see how they turn out! Both will be available at our farm stands starting mid-October.
- ♣ Out in the garden, we've really been enjoying the "more-on" mulching method that Anna spent most of the winter working on. With thick chip mulch, straw, and compost, weeding has been a minimal task this summer, giving us more time to spend on harvesting, planting, and assessing/addressing plant health. The thick mulch kept the soil well-hydrated for the start of the summer, but with little to no significant rain in the past 2+ months, we've had to start relying on irrigation to keep our soil life hydrated.



Grazing vs Gobbling: Four Months with the Tommerdahl Turkeys

By Jake

Thanksgiving is still over 2 months away, but our minds are already stuffed from all we have learned from drifting our rafter (surprisingly, that is what a group of turkeys is called) around here on the farm.

In early June, 58 poults (poult = turkey youngin) arrived on the farm and spent 2 weeks eating, sleeping and growing under the warm lights of the brooder, getting ready to go out into the great big grassy world of the farm. The turkeys were fed a finely ground mix of organic grains, but were clearly eager to get out onto pasture as made evident by their enthusiasm each time an insect hopped into the brooder.

After these initial weeks, we opened up the sides of the protective shelters to allow the birds to spread their wings and fly-ish. The turkeys bounced around their electric fenced in pen, hunting for grasshoppers, beetles, worms and grubs of all sorts. These adolescent birds also searched around their pen for flowers, bush and tree leaves and any other leafy plant they could get their beaks on. Although we have continued to feed them their organic grain ration, from this point on, their diets have been heavily enhanced by whatever food they naturally come across within their frequently moving fence.

As the turkeys grew more and their range widened, they began to remind me more and more of the cattle that Brie, my herding dog, and I used to manage. Although they can't eat/digest fibrous cellulous-filled grass as cattle do, the turkeys did an amazing job trampling grass to the ground and opening up the brushy areas of the farm, letting in new sunlight and promoting a diversity of plants to sprout up in future seasons. Whenever rain blesses us with its presence again, the trampled grass will also defend the soil from the force of water droplets, preventing compaction and slowing the water to allow for greater infiltration.

After ditching our clunky, damage-prone "turkey ship" and adapting a true free range style where the turkeys were sheltered only by trees and brush, Brie and I felt right at home moving the turkeys. Just as with previous cattle herds, Brie has helped me push the turkeys every 3-4 days to new pastures. We have simplified the system to only require fencing, feed troughs and a highly portable watering system. This simplified system has allowed us to step back and more fully let the turkeys live in nature.

The "rafter" of gobblers has trotted around for almost 4 months now, filling our fields with recycled nutrients, providing armor for our ground and promoting diversity in our ecosystems' spectrum of flora and fauna. I used to think cattle were the best and sole species needed to manage a diverse ecosystem and to promote soil growth on a farm. Now we are seeing more and more that cattle are simply one tool of many that can serve this role. Moving into next year, we have set the goal of introducing our rafter to a herd. With these species working together, our soil should grow rapidly and life should begin cycling with vigor.

In as early as just 3 weeks from now, we would love to share all we have experienced and regenerated in our soil with you in the form of a succulent turkey worthy of your family's Thanksgiving table. See the order form [here](#) for placing your order and note that our special pre-order discounts are available until processing day on September 29th!



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!

"Information is like compost—it does no good unless you spread it around."

~Eliot Coleman~

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