

Brittain Family Farms

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Hello to all!

As the beginning of a new year has come and gone I find myself thinking over this last years events and what is to come for this new year before us. We have so much to be thankful for: the projects we were able to accomplish and everything we learned through them, our health, the goals that were set and realized, and the relationships that we have formed with others through our farm.

Although the winter days get long we are thankful for the rest it provides our body from the hard working days of summer. At this time our minds are much busier than our bodies. Our days are filled with the hope and planning of a new year. We are looking forward to the many ways we can serve your family, the new friendships we will develop, the best way to use and care for the land God has entrusted us with, the new skills we will learn, the knowledge we will gain through trying new things and putting into practice all we have learned and feel convicted to do.

Corn prices have risen drastically and we are unsure if there is an end in sight due to the demand of ethanol. We are following this closely with much concern and hope that you understand that we have to reflect the increase to you. I took this time to once again search out an organic grain source. The closest we can find at this time is two hours away. Price for the grain that I use in preparing the rations we feed to the broilers, turkeys, pigs and hens would be double and this does not include the trucking to get it here or the storage that would need to be made available. As much as I would like to find a local source of organic or at the least, local naturally grown grain; I take heart knowing that we are much more than organic. Our grain purchases support our local farmers and businesses. Grass is a natural detoxifier. Because our animals have access to fresh ground and pasture daily, I feel confident that we are producing, eating and marketing the best food we can. I know that what the animal eats is not the only factor in the end result. Sunshine is not factored into the organic model and neither is access to clean, properly managed pasture. We strive to raise our animals as close to what they might naturally live without the use of routine antibiotics and growth hormones. Our grain rations are made without animal by products or synthetic vitamins/minerals. We truly believe that we are raising superior meat for your table-beyond organic! That said, let me know how you feel about this. If organic grain is that very important to you and a 50% increase in price over what we currently charge is of interest, we might be willing to make the transition. Please feel free to comment on your order form. If you know of a local source of grain that has not been grown using pesticides and herbicides please let us know this also.

Eggs- In December we constructed a bright, spacious greenhouse for our hens to live in the winter. It warms up so nice in there on cold winter days. It is as near a perfect home for them when the winter winds and snow blow! In the spring, we will move them out into the pasture using a portable henhouse surrounded by electronet to protect them from predators. Later this spring, I will have nearly 100 hens in production and will be providing free range eggs on the farm, am considering farmers market, and would be very interested in putting a small refrigerator/cooler at a place of business using an honor system. If anyone can help with this please let us know. Once our hens are in full production, we would be happy to reserve eggs for customers who prepay. Please make your desire known and we will be happy to work with you on this.

Broilers- We will be raising two batches of broilers this year, early summer and fall. We will raise as

many as we have orders for and need orders for the 1st batch by March 15. Please make note. I have to place my orders at least 6 weeks in advance. There is not as much of a hurry to place your orders for the fall batch. By all means, spread the word to friends/family and make sure to order enough to see you through the winter. We do not ask that you prepay for your broiler orders, but are requesting that if you feel that it would not slight your family and feel inclined to do so, it would be a huge blessing to our family. Because the broilers are sold by weight, there is no way of knowing exactly what your order will total before processing day. We will make any adjustments for prepaid orders at the time of pick up. You could consider that the average broiler weight is 4.5 lbs. dressed. We need to build additional pasture pens and purchase more efficient watering systems for the pens. We would also like to transition over to processing the poultry on farm this year- either with the purchase of our own equipment or the rental of an MDA approved mobile processing trailer. We are unsure at the time of this newsletter if it will be a reality or something we will have to continue to work towards.

Turkeys- Our turkeys will be raised free range on pasture surrounded by electronet and a portable shade and shelter for their protection. They will be moved to clean ground as often as necessary. We estimate this to be every few days. Turkeys are excellent foragers and will consume a large amount of grass, weeds and bugs, which equals tremendously healthy meat for us. This is our first year raising turkeys, but I am taking an educated guess that they will dress between 12 and 20lbs.

Pork- Robert did a great job raising 7 feeder pigs for us and our customers this past year. We are hearing rave reviews about the pork! We allowed the pigs access to the garden after harvest and they had a great time “hogging off” the leftovers and tilling the soil. We spent much time observing them. Pigs are very fun to watch.....really! This is one of our favorite projects and actually miss them when they are gone. Our pork will be \$1.69 lb this year. You may reserve a half or a whole. We do require a \$100.00 deposit with your order for a whole and \$50.00 deposit for half. We raise the pigs for a fall butcher, so they are purchased late spring/early summer. We will raise as many as we have room for; first come first served.

Beef- For the first time this fall we will have beef available. We are using a management intensive grazing system. Each day they will be moved to a fresh paddock. These will truly be grass-fed. During the winter they receive hay that we have put up for the year, but they are never grain fed. We know that ruminants were not designed to eat grain. It is not healthy for them or us. Because they are put on fresh ground daily, they will consume more and gain better than on a traditional pasture system. We will allow at least a three week rest for each paddock to ensure that the grass is not being over grazed and that any parasite cycle is broken. A deposit is required to place and hold an order for beef also. \$100.00 whole, \$50.00 half. If you miss out this year, let us know if you would like a refund or to added to the list for the following year. And remember, if you think a side of beef is too much for your family find someone to go in with you. At the time of this newsletter we have not set our beef price. This is new to us and have to figure in many factors with no experience to base anything on, but ensure a savings over equivalent quantities of comparable cuts if purchased from the store.

Vegetables- Anyone who has spent any time talking with me since our move to the farm knows how very disappointed I have been in the condition and fertility of the soil here. We grew twice as many vegetables here than at our previous home and got about half as much of a harvest. We continue to compost and have added much organic matter to the garden soil, but know that it will take a very long time to restore and amend this clay soil. I have worked many hours this winter planning a more productive garden using a lot of info I have gained through the book “How to grow more Vegetables (and fruits, nuts, berries, grains, and other crops) *than you ever thought possible on less land than you can imagine” by John Jeavons. Great book! Check it out. We hope to have a much better harvest this year

and are willing to share with our customers any surplus for a comparable price to store produce. We will have any extra in season produce available on poultry processing days and for those that would like to frequent the farm more often for eggs and such let me know if there is anything you are interested in on a more regular basis or in greater quantity and I will see what we can do. In the next year or two, once we are comfortable with what we can produce, we would be like to offer shares for a growing season that would allow your family fresh, in-season produce weekly. We will not grow hybrid vegetables if there is another alternative such as organic, open-pollinated and/or heirloom.

Dairy- I am excited to say that my three Nubian doe's are all bred and due to kid at the end of April and middle of May. I will most likely have kids available for meat or dairy. Inquire if you are interested. We also purchased a family cow as a family investment in January. Her name is Gentle and is a fairly large 6 yr.old Holstein. She is due to calve in July. By the time this newsletter reaches you we should be swimming in milk and our arms weary from churning butter! Robert might even be getting the hang of milking.....

In closing we would like to bare our hearts to you a bit. It is our goal to produce the best meat and eggs in the world. Yes, the world! This goal consumes most all of our time, energy, and dreams. We know that if we lose focus or sidetrack we begin to fail. We are striving to create a fully functional family farm. We are striving to build a business, but just as importantly, relationships. We are striving to gain customers, but just as importantly, friends. Our prices reflect honest, hard work and good food, not cheap food. There is plenty of that available at the supermarket. We are proud of what we do. Come visit. We would be happy to show you around.

We do not like to receive junk mail and know that you don't either. If you do not want to receive this newsletter please make it known. If you are interested in anything we have to offer, please fill out the order form and return it in the SASE. As always, feel free to make copies and share it with friends/family or have them personally contact us. Please make note of what you do on the order form. I will be in touch to give you more specific info and dates that pertain to your specific order.

In Service,

The Brittain's
Robert, Kim, Megan, Ryan and Gracie