

2014 March Chicken Turkey and Rabbit Update

**From:** Tom Barthel <Snakeriverfarmer@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Friday, March 28, 2014 9:53 PM

**To:** gail wilkinson <gaildw@yahoo.com>

**Subject:** Chicken, Turkey and Rabbit Update

**Dear Friends, Neighbors and Customers**

Last week I sent a message telling you that we planned to offer pastured poultry and rabbits.

Your response was overwhelming. Well, not literally overwhelming but close.

Fifty of you ordered well over 400 chickens, about 25 turkeys and over 50 rabbits.

That is many more than I expected.

We have made plans to fill all your orders.

The plans are as follows.

**Chickens**

Ryan will start 100 Red Ranger chicks about mid April. Red Rangers were developed for pasturing. They are said to forage better than conventional Cornish X Whites and are said to be tastier.

We will start 100 White Cornish X chicks in early May. The Whites are essentially the same birds commonly raised in confinement. We have raised them for many years here and find them to grow well in a pasture setting. The whites will have larger breasts and meatier limbs than the Red Rangers.

These two breeds are the ones grown in the great majority of pasture situations. Joel Salatin grows the Reds.

Unless you specify otherwise, you will get one or more of each types. In that way you can compare and tell us what to grow next year.

Both will be delicious pasture raised chickens.

These first two groups should be ready for harvest around the first of July.

We will have the birds harvested at a licensed facility. Quite possibly our good friends at Quality Meats in Foley.

The whole, frozen, shrink wrapped birds should average around five pounds each, as packaged.

They will include giblets and necks.

At \$4 per pound, including processing, the average bird will cost \$20.

Ryan will start a second group, probably in June.

In addition, we have asked our fellow farmers at Wellspring Farms near Aiken to raise 150 pastured chickens to help fill your orders.

Wellspring Farms is owned and operated by Joe and Barbara Gans and Brad and Sarah Kucera. They produce eggs, chicken, maple syrup, vegetables and recently added cattle to the operation. I have visited their farm and Sarah has visited us numerous times.

These chickens will be Whites. They will be raised, fed, handled and harvested in the same way as the chickens Ryan and I produce.

We have asked for their help this year because they have experience and capacity that we lack.

I have pasted a link to the Wellspring page below. You are welcome to contact them directly, if you wish.

### **Turkeys.**

Ryan will start a group of 20 conventional turkeys in early May.

I will start a group of 20 Red Bourbon turkeys in early May.

We have raised conventional turkeys here, in smaller groups, for many years. They are sometimes called "broad breasted turkeys." These are actually too heavy when mature to breed naturally. All popular Thanksgiving turkeys are of this type. They are good foragers and do very well on pasture.

We will try to harvest these birds so that their packaged weight is from 15 to 20 pounds. Giblets and neck included. Shrink wrapped and frozen, whole.

At \$6 per pound, these turkeys will cost from \$90 to \$120 each.

Some of you have asked for Red Bourbons. Red Bourbons are a heritage breed of turkey. Beautiful and flashy in color. They are said to be tastier than broad breasted turkeys but they are less meaty.

The weight of these birds will be significantly less than the conventional turkeys. I estimate packaged weights between 8 and 15 pounds.

At \$6 per pound, these turkeys will cost between \$48 and \$90 each.

These Red Bourbons should be a wonderful treat when prepared properly. I do not recommend them for your traditional family meal. You might have some disappointed relatives. Unless you have served them before, these should be for a special meal, not a common meal.

### **Rabbits**

I intend to raise 25 to 30 of the rabbits here. Gail is going to help with the grazing.

Sarah at Wellspring will raise a similar number.

We both graze our rabbits.

In fact, I built some new grazing cages last summer after visiting Wellspring and seeing the ground cages that Sarah had built for her rabbits.

A three pound dressed rabbit will cost \$15 at \$5 per pound.

All of these animals will be raised with great care.

They will not be medicated.

They will have the most natural diet and lifestyle possible in keeping with their safety.

Predators are the number one concern with pastures poultry and rabbits.

Please email me if you have any questions.

Feel free to change your order if something here is not to your liking.

**One more point.**

While making our plans I communicated with our good friends at **Gale Woods Farm** in Minnetrista.

If you have not visited Gale Woods, you should. They do a terrific job of education.

They also produce meat and vegetables for sale, including pastured chickens.

Those of you who live in the south west metro may find them to be a local source for meat, egg and produce.

When I visited them in January, there was lard for sale in their store cooler.

Check them out.

I have pasted a link for Gale Woods below.

Best possible regards.

Tom

p.s. I will send recipes and cooking information before harvest time.

When done right, a family will get several delicious meals of meat, soup and broth from these pastured birds.