

Big Maple Family Farm, LLC

NEWSLETTER

July 20, 2025

Hay, Hay, Hay

Farming is a challenge in itself with crops, but when you combine raising livestock and making hay, then it almost seems to challenge you when it comes to equipment, time, and grit.

We can't say it enough this year, the weather has us truly in a whole new pattern for the year. Our best intentions were not met at all with planting produce early, getting hay equipment ready early, or just being ready. With a wet and cold May and June, we were behind in everything. Now add in that the hay was at its prime we just needed to challenge ourselves.



One thing we have struggled with in the past is having veggies ready and being overwhelmed with hay. We didn't want to do more than we could handle and oftentimes we felt like hay would drag on for weeks and just hang there while trying to maintain the garden as well. So we wanted to reduce how long we kept hay going, plus the weather really has us scrambling. This year we just worked hard at it. If you checked out our last newsletter, we spent the entire 4th of July Starting and finishing a whole portion of property. This past weekend we finished up a portion of borrowed ground and starting Monday (21st) we will be starting and finishing up borrowed property down the road. Our plan is to go at it hard with these four days of sun and be done.

Now when we say done, we mean done with 1st crop. However, once we finish down the road and bring all the equipment home, we will be doing some maintenance and getting ready for 2nd crop and basically starting right back at the beginning. Our plans are all laid out and it takes a lot of time to do hay, especially when we do square bales. That is all hands on deck plus we usually try to get borrowed hands. In talking to someone a couple days ago, they didn't understand why hay had to be done at certain times or why the saying is "you make hay when the sun shines" but after explaining that there really is a science and timing component to it.

Let's break down the process for you; the first step is to cut the hay. Last year we had break down after break down, bought a used haybine and that broke too so we went and invested in a discbine. Now the difference in the two has been noticed heavily. The discbine cuts much faster and lower to the ground and the crimpers inside are helping to start the drying process. Once the hay is cut we let it lay for a while. If we cut in the morning then in the evening we are out tedding it. Tedding the hay spreads it out of the thick row and allows air to flow through and start drying faster. The sun is the key to all of this. Without the sun the hay will take longer to dry. The final step is raking the hay and since the grass is drier now we can ted and rake in the same day depending on when the cutting took place. We want the hay to be as dry as possible so that when we bale it, there is not much heat coming through the bale. If there is too much moisture, we could have a bale catch fire and that is not what we want so we make careful decisions and a couple times we have held off on a field an extra day for it to dry better. After the hay is dry, here comes the hard work



of baling. Now we opted several years ago to start going into more round bale production because the man power was not there, however we still make some square bales as those are big sellers and they work for us in a pinch. With extra hay this year that we want to sell later on, the square bales are being hit heavy. Our goal is 1,200 (maybe more depending on space). This will be the most bales we have done in a couple years as we tire out with limited man power, but we also know that we have to put the hay somewhere. We are truly down to the end and we can't wait for first crop to be done, because second crop bales are much lighter, and well that makes all the difference.

If you have never helped a farmer bale hay, then you should add it to your bucket list. If you have allergies, take some medicine and hit the fields. There are lots of us here in the local area that raise livestock and bale hay. It truly is an experience and the farmer will appreciate the extra set of hands.

Did Someone Say Turkey?

July seems to be flying by so why not bring up Thanksgiving? I mean they do have a Christmas in July right? If you haven't heard about our farm fresh turkeys, then we highly encourage you to check them out. Turkeys arrived at the farm in the middle of June and have graduated this weekend to the pasture. They are finally big enough we don't think that a hawk will eat them, and since they are sitting on the roost, we know they can get high when needed.

Our turkeys are raised just like our meat chickens. We take them right along the fields and have them eat fresh grasses, especially clover. They are also fed a grain that helps keep them getting all the nutrients that an animal like them need to stay healthy. We took a gamble and are raising 70 turkeys this year. This is an increase from years past and we are hoping that it transpires into some very happy Thanksgiving tables this year. In order to get a turkey the process is easy; in late August we will put out a sign up form. We ask that you register for a turkey or if you want two, then you need to fill the form out twice. From there, a non-refundable deposit must be paid. Unfortunately, we had to start asking for a deposit after several people ordered and did not show up which costs us sales in the years past. Then you wait for us to call you with your turkey. We work to get you as close to possible within your weight range of turkey. Since we do not have the freezer space, don't be surprised if you're asked to come get your turkey early. Turkeys are processed early so that we can take our time processing them as manpower is also limited during this time. We have had many happy customers from our fresh turkeys and if you're interested keep our farm fresh turkey in mind for this year.



Farm Updates

Not too much to update this time on the farm. We are slowly waiting on produce to arrive. We had tried so hard to have it ready by now, but the weather took care of that. We are close though to having some great produce for you along with our pasture raised meats. Moose is currently being weaned from the bottle and we hay is almost done. The summer seems to be moving so fast these days that we are just tackling each day as we can.

Weeds, Weeds, and More Weeds



Growing produce is one of the biggest gambles a person can make. You can plant the seed and it never germinate or you get a beautiful plant and nothing actually grows on it, or a disease takes over. There are so many risks and no matter what you do, it will always be a gamble. This year we took on a bigger gamble to grow more produce. There were things that told us to try to grow more, but that gamble also comes with more weeds. Over the weekend we took some

time as a family and spent some time pulling weeds. Thankfully we do lay mulch down for some of our plants but you just can't do that for them all so pulling weeds is a must. Our family time this weekend was spent in the field pulling weeds in the coolness of the evening and the beautiful Sunsets. The cucumbers are coming and the zucchinis will be available starting this week. Things are coming and we are so close to having a great selection of produce and here's hoping that things flourish throughout the rest of the season and your dinner tables are full of great things that we worked hard to grow.



T-Shirts Available!

Over the Christmas Holiday, Logan approached me and wanted help to create a shirt. He thought it would be cool to include some animals from our farm with a maple tree. He had the design in his head but he needed help bringing it to life. So we spent some time playing around in Canva and were able to design this awesome T-shirt. This was his gift to everyone on Christmas morning and after we started wearing them, others

were looking for the shirt as well. We now carry some shirts in stock here at the farm store. It's a great way to help us get the word out about our farm. We know that the best marketing is word of mouth and when you're showing your support of our farm in public, someone might ask you about us. We hope you have nothing but good things to say and encourage others to come check out our farm as well. The shirts were purchased locally and can be purchased by ordering on our online store, at the farmers market, or in our on farm store. They cost \$20 and are a great quality. We hope to see you wearing one of our shirts this year.



News from the Horse Program

The Therapeutic Horse program is currently on our "summer Break." This is the time that we let the horses take some time to be horses, and we also add in a couple extra fun things. We are currently heading into week 5 of our preschool program and the kids (and parents) are loving it. The kids have learned some great things about horses and have mucked stalls, learned how to groom, learned how to lead, are learning to ride, and we also have done some little hands on projects. Creating programs and spaces for people and kids to feel safe around horses has been going on for 10 years and we are so thankful for the spaces and ideas we have been given and the support we have had. Last week we worked with some other local businesses to put together a little event here at farm to help create another unique, positive interaction with equines and farm animals. We



SNUGGLES & SUCCULENTS
A True Farm Experience

Join us at Big Maple Farm's for a life enhancement experience of snuggling and succulents. Snuggling animals helps enhance the oxytocin in our brains and you don't want to miss out experiencing that time with the cutest ones here at the farm. You will be able to paint a ceramic planter, snuggle the mini donkey, mini horse, and lamb, & plant some succulents!

Craft will be led by Katie Thompson
Succulents provided by The Flower Bar

LEARN MORE
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SEPTEMBER 14, 2025
2:00PM
\$40
REGISTRATION REQUIRED
Register Today

QR Code

will be holding a snuggles and succulents event on Sept. 14th and this event will be great for everyone. You will leave happy and calm after the snuggles and planting. Your memory will be triggered each day when you look at the ceramic planter that you create and while you watch your succulent grow. The best part is you can come and snuggle donkey any time in our schedule. Donkey and Fiona love to snuggle and it will be a great time for all those who join us. Cost is \$40 and you can register now by scanning the QR Code. Your attendance at this event helps support the therapeutic riding program and keeps us maintaining the needs of the program throughout the winter.

Fall Lesson Time

With Summer Break from the horse program, comes the time where we are encouraging individuals to take advantage of the fall lesson times. We are now taking on new sign ups for the next period of riding and horsemanship skills programs. If you are interested or know someone who might be interested please reach out to Amanda at 814-335-0804 to learn how easy it is to register. Lessons are available Evenings and Weekends.



Big Maple Farm's Natural Therapies, Inc.

NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

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Therapeutic Riding, Horse Powered Reading, Horsemanship Skills, & Books in the Barn

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