

## Chapter IX

### Start-Up

Here's To Us...

The ones disenchanted with the blandness of conformity.

The ones who swim upstream while the societal horde rides  
the river of least resistance.

The ones who favor home-grown & hand-made over cheap  
and mass-produced.

The ones who embrace sweaty summer days and frigid  
winter nights instead of chasing constant comfort.

The ones who grow, shepherd, nurture, produce, knead and  
craft rather than consume.

The ones who are old-fashioned on purpose and choose to  
truly live instead of merely exist.

At last... We have our  
land to start! We're not  
debt-free yet, but it's  
coming. We have some  
money set aside to work  
with and we have land to  
work on. We have talked  
it over and we understand  
that we are taking steps to  
change not only our lives,  
but our way of life forever  
Understand that we are  
beginning a track that will  
test us as nothing ever has  
before. We will work  
harder, for longer hours,  
than we ever have before.



Our plan calls for the Farmer family to move onto our land immediately while Mr. Franklin Farmer keeps his town job for one more year to finish paying off debt and possibly a second year to get things organized and crops flowing with markets developed for those crops.

Mrs. Francine Farmer will leave her town job and take over management of the homestead, including the schooling of the two children, Phil and Faye, ages eight and six respectively. Fran will have her hands full with her new duties and with her new training program. Fran has done only a bare minimum of canning, and that, merely fruits, jams and jellies... all things that could be safely canned using nothing more than a water bath canner. On the farm, she will need to know how to can meats and vegetables as well as broth and other things that must be canned under pressure in order to get the internal temperature high enough to safely preserve these staples. This need not be done immediately for it will be months before the first crops are ready.



It has been decided that the Farmer farm will start with chickens, both meat birds and layers, as well as rabbits ducks and turkeys in addition to a large garden. If time and resources permit, a

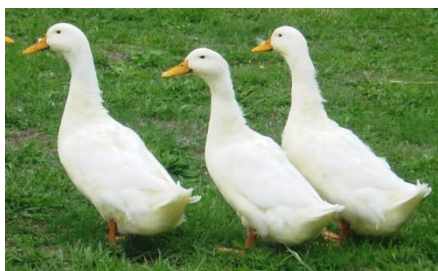


beef steer may be raised as well.

In the evenings and on weekends through the seemingly endless winter, Frank built four chicken tractors four rabbitat forage coops for their coming rabbits. He also built two brooder boxes for the chicks and duckling that would arrive in mid April. They would add turkeys and a few geese to be guards for the growing broilers and the laying hens. The idea for these devices is to allow both the poultry and the rabbits to free range and thereby provide much of their own food.

Frank spent time in the small shed behind their small house constructing these devices for their anticipated flocks and kindles. Frank and Fran had sat down and computed that their family would consume two broiler chickens per week over the year. Also, he wanted one turkey per month and two ducks per month. This meant that in his first year he would need to raise 100 broiler chickens 25 ducks and 12 turkeys.

In addition to these meat providers, they wanted egg layers as well. It was thought that 10 laying hens would provide all the fresh eggs the Farmer family would need. Fran Farmer also stated that she would like some duck eggs as well as they were very good eating fresh and they work exceedingly



well in baking recipes using one duck egg where two eggs are called for in the recipe.

The sum total was then to provide space for 100 boilers 100 ducks and 12 turkeys. Also included would be 15

laying hens and 10 laying ducks. It was felt that this would provide for the entire poultry needs for the family for a full year.

Since they wanted this farm to, eventually provide for their entire living, the prudent thing to do was to provide one for



the family and one to sell... This would, essentially, make all of these animals they used free to them since being able to sell the rest would pay the cost for the entire operation.

meat ducks. Since they had to build the market for their ducks, they opted to 1/2 extra duck for every duck they processed for themselves. They would also need 30 laying ducks, and 25 turkeys. In addition to these, we will be adding 4 geese to raise as guard birds for the free-ranging poultry.



**First Year Order**

<u>Broilers</u>	<u>Laying Hens</u>	<u>Ducks</u>	<u>Turkeys</u>	<u>Geese</u>
200	30	180	25	4

These need not all be brought in at once. In fact, it would be preferable were it not done so. When ordering the birds

from the hatchery they would be wise to do so in two stages this first year.... Based on the processing time for the stock.

The first batch should be ordered to arrive 3-4 weeks prior to the last frost date for the area where the Farmers live. In



my area, that means I want birds in the brooders about 10 April. This means that 100 broilers, 30 laying hens, 100 ducks and 4 geese. Our initial order, will be leaving the brooder for the pastures not later than 5 May and it could be



as early as 1 May. Our second order consisting of 100 broilers, 80 ducks and 25 turkeys will be ordered so they arrive on 6 May and go into brooders.

The processing time varies with species grown and with what they are to be used for. Pekin ducks must be processed at 49 days of age because that is the time when they have the fewest pinfeathers which makes processing so much simpler.

If we utilize the Cornish cross breed for meat chickens, they are prime for processing at 56 days, yielding a 4.5 to 5.5 lb dressed bird. Any delay will result in heavy losses. This breed was created strictly for meat and they grow so fast that they will actually outgrow their organs and simply will



not live long beyond that eight week age. Even then, some of them will be too large to walk and will have to be lifted to be moved. The traditional heritage breeds such as Rhode Island red or barred rocks will require 12 to 14 weeks and still result in a smaller bird. It is highly recommended that the Farmer family farm raise the Cornish cross for meat and a heritage breed for egg production.

Contrarily, the Pekin ducks are very fine for meat, and, being bred from mallards, they are adequate for egg production but the Khaki Campbell will provide over 300 eggs per year and is our favored laying duck.

I would want them delivered four weeks before the last frost date. In my area that would mean mid April while in Louisiana, It might mean mid February! The second order of 100 Cornish Cross meat birds plus 40 Pekin, 40 Khaki Campbell ducks and 25 turkeys will be ordered to arrive the second week in June, approximately 8 weeks after the first batch arrives. By this time, the first batch will all be harvested and the brooders will be idle.

The young chicks, poults and ducklings will all need to spend the first 3 to 4 weeks in the brooder boxes, under the heater. This is essential as none of these are capable of surviving without external heat. If we do not provide it, they will pile up together, smothering many in the process and pneumonia will take many more.

Chicks must be kept at 95° with turkeys requiring about 5° more for their first week or so of life. As they grow and mature, the heat should be gradually reduced and the heat source above the ground should be moved increasingly further away giving them ample room for access and egress

to the heater... Never put more than 250 to 300 chicks under the same heater as, if something frightens them, and, at that age, almost everything does, they will panic and pile up on one another, smothering those at the bottom.

Chicks will grow rapidly in their first weeks and by three weeks of age, if the weather is amenable, they will be moved to pasture and placed in the tractors we have built for them for this purpose. The same



tractor will work admirably for both the meat chickens and the laying chickens at this stage plus both the ducks and the turkeys, although I would keep the broilers, layers, ducks and turkeys separate. The 4 geese can be put in with the layer chicks.

Under normal pasturing conditions these tractors should be moved to fresh pasture daily. When the birds get larger and are eating more, it may become necessary to move them twice per day. However, in this, our first season, we will not have them on open pasture, but will have them on the ground we are planning to garden next season. We will move our birds through and across the ground, allowing our animals to do the tilling and soil preparation needed for a great garden in season two. We will be having a sizable garden in our first season, but it's scope will be smaller and the soil less ideal as we begin. We will discuss this in greater detail later in this chapter.

As we have described, there are some things we will need to launch our pastured poultry and our rabbitry.

We need housing! It is late January and we have ordered our chicks, ducks and poults to be delivered at the appropriate dates, so now we need infrastructure for them. This infrastructure has, across it's range of use, one major common attribute... It is all very portable! Also, it is inexpensive to build, even by a relative newbie to construction. As long as one knows what end of the saw to hold and which end of the nail, the pointy end or the flat end, goes into the wood the results will come. Yes it would be nice to have all the latest in power tools and all the gadgets



now available to minimize labor, but, the fact is, the pyramids, the Taj Mahal and the Tower of London were all built without a single electrically powered tool!

Likewise I have built houses with no more power tools than a 7 1/4 inch Skil saw and a quarter inch twist drill! Now, that said, I am going to recommend a few basic tools to begin with. These items are available readily and cheaply on craigslist, Facebook marketplace and eBay.

The first thing we need is a 10 inch table saw or larger. With this we need a supply of blades. Remember this, new blades are not sharp blades! Do yourself a favor and take your Skil saw and tablesaw blades to a professional saw filer and let him work his magic on them. I guarantee you will appreciate



the difference. The next thing needed will be a 3/8 inch drill with a very good set of bits for it. These should include not only twist drills, but auger bits, expandable bits and hole saw's. All of these will be needed from time to time on the farm.

If you are a capable welder perhaps this is something that should be considered at the onset as it will be in demand for repairs and

fabrication from the start. A decent mig welder which can be run on either 110 V or 220 V can be had for a couple of hundred dollars, and if you are not efficient as a welder,



now is the time to learn. Ask around among your friends to find somebody willing to get you started. If you can't find somebody that way, call the local high school or community college and ask the industrial arts teacher if one of his charges would be willing to spend an afternoon lining you out so you can begin practicing.

This is, basically, all the power tools we will need to get things started along with a Skil saw and scroll saw.

For hand tools we will need a hand saw, a couple of hammers of different weight... 20 and 24 ounce to start with... We will need wire cutters, tin snips, lineman's pliers, screwdrivers in both straight and Phillips heads to begin with. We will need a carpenter square several clamps and about a ton of carpenters pencils along with a quality pocket

knife. Of course, we will want to add to this as opportunity arises for surely, the truest measure of the successful homesteader is the size of his tool locker!

We have talked about the critters we will start with in a general way... we have one more to discuss in this vein before we move on to more specifics. This one is our rabbits... Since, at least in the beginning, we shall be rearing our rabbits strictly for meat, we shall consider only two



breeds and either will do nicely. The New Zealand White is a superb meat rabbit, yielding 3.5 to 5 pound rabbits at 10 to 12 weeks of age. The does

breed easily, are docile and easy to handle and will kindle an average of 8 to 10 kits per kindle. It is my breed of choice.

My second choice, and it's nearly a tossup between the two, would be the Californian. Also a docile creature, they are hardy like the New Zealands and will kindle large nests and are also excellent mothers. I find they are just slightly slower growing than the Whites, but not so much that I would let it keep me from handling this breed as well. In fact, when we get into full production on our rabbitry, I would have both.

We will begin our production with only three rabbits, two does and a buck. The ideal ratio is one buck for each three does and that is what we will strive for in seasons two, three and beyond. It is wise husbandry to always breed your does

in pairs so that if something happens that one doe cannot support her litter, perhaps the other doe will adopt them and rear them to weaning age of 6 weeks.

The following is a chart showing the breeding and rearing cycles for these two does only...

### Two Doe Production Cycle

1 Jan	Breed Does
1 Feb	Kindle Does K-1 - 16 Kits
15 Mar	Wean K-1
	Breed Does
	Put on Pasture
15 Apr	Kindle K-2 - 16 Kits
	Harvest K-1 48 lbs Meat
1 Jun	Wean K-2
	Rebreed
1 Jul	Kindle K-3
	Harvest K-2 48 lbs Meat
15 Aug	Wean K-3
	Rebreed
15 Sept	Kindle K-4
	Harvest K-3 48 lbs Meat
1 Nov	Wean K-4
	Rebreed
	Remove from Pasture
1 Dec	Kindle K-5
	Harvest K-4 48 lbs Meat

This schedule will provide us with some 64 rabbits providing about 200 lbs of very high quality, low fat, zero cholesterol, high protein meat. While we will need 50 of these for our own freezer, there will be 14 more for sale, providing the money to pay for the rearing of the entire batch, providing those in our freezer to us for free.

Next year we will double this schedule, if our market has been built to the level to sustain this level of production. With rabbits, it's very easy to increase or decrease your production to meet market demands on a moment's notice, it would seem.

This increased production will call for 4 does, 2 bucks and our we need to be rearing replacements for our does and for our bucks. We need to plan on replacing our breeding does biannually and our breeding bucks annually to biannually. This will require we build 10 Rabbitat tractors as well as having 10 indoor cages for those months we do not pasture them.

### **Pigs**

Our first large animal to come on board after our rabbits will be our pigs. We shall start with four this first season, and move that up for season two depending on the market we have built at that point. In preparation for that day, we will need a stock pile of wood chips for bedding and for the carbon based material for the carbonaceous diaper we will utilize to keep the carbon/nitrogen ratios in balance and to prevent odors and nitrogen runoff.

The supply of chips is usually not too difficult to obtain if one if one cannot generate his own. We should contact local tree companies and offer to take some of theirs... Generally they have to pay a landfill to take them and are quite happy to have a free dumpsite when they are in our area. Municipalities are another resource for the same reasons just described.

Whatever the sources, we will lay in a good supply, for we will be finding ourselves using it in many applications and in great quantities on the farm.

As quickly as our pigs arrive we will be putting them to work. These fellows will be our rototillers for our garden area! There is nothing

built to root out unwanted growth and plow the ground like the snout of a pig. Even massive stumps can be removed by the judicious placement of



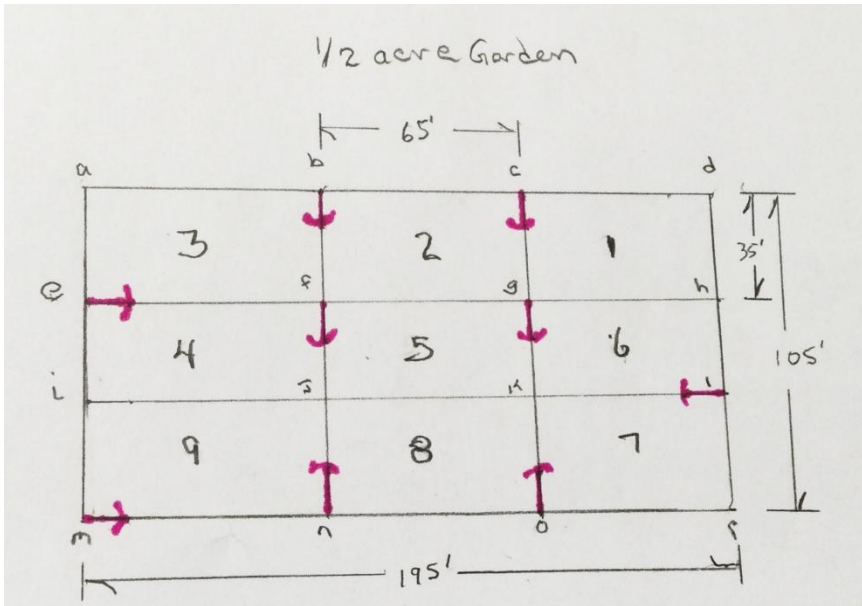
corn around the roots of the stump, repeating the process until eventually, one can just hook onto the stump with the tractor or a truck and just drag it away. They will do the same with any vegetative matter in our proposed garden area. The illustration below is the depiction of our 1/2 acre garden block. It is divided into nine paddocks, each enclosed by two aluminum electrical wires. It has a perimeter of approximately 200 lineal feet... 65' x 35'.

When this wire is electrified the lower wire should be very close to the ground... No more than 8 inches to 10 inches off it. The upper wire should be less than 24 inches above the ground. Pigs are short and their eyes are close to the ground. We want them to be able to see these wires because, if they see them, knowing what they are, they will avoid them.

It takes very little effort to train pigs to an electric fence. Put a strand around the inside of their holding pen and let them be in there for a day and they will not get near it. In fact they will be so savvy to it that we must use wooden gates for



them to pass through. Even if we remove the wire for them to pass, they will not do so... I guess they feel like they're being tricked... "It's here, I just can't see ya!" The wooden gate however they know... They have been up against that with no real affects, so if it's moved, They will simply pass through with no problem!



We begin by running our two-strand electrical wire from a to d and from e to h. We then string lines from d to h and from c to a, making sure our wooden gate is on the paddock side of this last line so that the pigs only see the gate installed at c-c', not the wires running behind it. If we have electricity available, we can simply plug in our charger and we're in business. In the absence of electricity, there are solar powered chargers that will work very well for us.

Beginning in Paddock One, we leave the pigs in for about a week. Adjust this by watching how they have it prepped, but never exceed 12 days. If more time is needed for preparation, simply cycle through them all twice. When our

time is up in Paddock One, we simply move the gate to position b-b' and move wire d-h to position b-f and Paddock Two is open for business. It just lacks us moving in their feed and water.



Repeat this as shown in the illustration through the remaining paddocks until all nine are so treated. As a paddock is completed,

cover it with a ground cloth of some type to prevent weed growth. By the end of February, except in the extreme north and higher elevations, the grass will be wanting to push its way through the soil and this ground cloth will prevent that.

Once this cycle is complete and all nine paddocks are done, unless we deem a second cycle is advisable, move the pigs to the area we want to expand our garden into next year and let them repeat their magic here.

Early plant seeds can go into the ground as their dates arrive and the poultry will go on the rest of the block in their tractors built for garden use. Chickens are excellent soil builders but their waste requires a year to compost. Rabbit waste does not! It can be applied directly from the rabbitat to the garden bed! Therefore, after our pigs are moved out, immediately apply a layer of wood chips for use as the carbonaceous diaper necessary to neutralize the pig poo and the chicken poo.

When we move the chickens on the garden plot after the pigs are gone and these chicks are large enough to be outside around three weeks of age, they will begin scratching in the soil and chips, doing a natural job of tilling and fertilizing our garden plot. As soon as the chickens' time is done here, the soil is ready to plant! If we are ahead of our plant dates, cover the soil and wait.



Remember, each paddock will have room for nine 30 inch wide planting beds 65 feet long and separated with an 18 inch wide walkway between those beds. We may not have need in the first year of all 81 beds. If we do not, we will plant a good cover crop on that area and we will run our rabbit tractors on that to prepare it for next season.

This, then, is our first year in a nutshell. We will start with our rabbits and add our pigs as soon as we feel comfortable putting them on the ground. We will need to provide them with a rudimentary shelter and a bedding area out of the weather, but otherwise, they will manage themselves. Pigs will not mess their bedding area. They will find a place to poo and will return to that every time they need to go. We will need to simply cover that area with wood chips daily and, after they're fed and watered, our job is done.

Our initial year will provide us with 100 broilers in our freezer, 50 rabbits, 1 hog, 50 ducks and 12 turkeys and a beef is we decide. This will be added to the produce from our garden which will be discussed in a later chapter. In addition, our laying hens will begin providing us with about a dozen eggs a day for our own use, plus another dozen eggs a day to sell.

These will be small at first, but will grow larger as the chickens mature.

This first batch of hens should lay well into winter when shorter

daylight hours will curtail production



In addition to our freezer stuff, we will have for sale, 14 rabbits, 100 broilers, 70 ducks and 13 turkeys. In addition to these smaller animals, we will have 3 full hogs for sale. Add to this, about a dozen eggs a day for the period of September through the end of the year.

Depending on how we manage our garden, we will have a ton of vegetables to offer as well. Our net income off these meats should pay us from \$7500 to \$10,000... more than enough to finance our entire farm operation, including construction of our portable infrastructure.

In season two, we will more than double our production to match our increased marketing. This will be the beginning of our self sufficiency on the farm. We have already produced all of our foods except dairy and imported items.

The difference between the homestead prior to World War II and that of today is, then, if you didn't grow it, you didn't eat it... today we can still buy imports because we will have ample for sale to fund this. Remember, we are producing the FINEST in purely grown, organic, free range products. It will sell for more than what is in the grocery store because it is much higher quality and much better tasting than anything that could be purchased there.

By season two, we will be out of debt and able to move onto our farm full time. When we do that, our cost of living will be very, very low as we will be homebodies and we will be producing all of our own protein and 60%-70% of our vegetable stuffs. Our goal will be to financially support ourselves on less than \$10,000 per year. And, believe me, this is more than doable... it will set us free!

### Our Calendar for Season ONE

1 Jan	Breed 2 Does
1 Feb	Kindle Does K-1 - 16 Kits
15 Mar	Wean K-1
	Breed Does
	Rabbits on Pasture
10 Apr	Poultry Batch 1 Arrives
15 Apr	Kindle K-2 - 16 Kits
	Harvest K-1 48 lbs Meat
1 May	Batch 1 on Pasture
19 May	Process Batch 1 - 70 Ducks
26 May	Process Batch 1 - 100 Broilers
1 Jun	Wean K-2
	Rebreed 2 Does
8 Jun	Poultry Batch 2 Arrives
29 Jun	Batch 2 on Pasture
1 Jul	Kindle K-3



	Harvest K-2 48 lbs Meat
26 Jul	Process Batch 2 - 80 Ducks
3 Aug	Process Batch 2 - 100 Broilers
15 Aug	Wean K-3
	Rebreed 2 Does
15 Sept	Kindle K-4
	Harvest K-3 48 lbs Meat
10 Oct	Process 4 Hogs
1 Nov	Wean K-4
	Rebreed 2 Does
	Remove from Pasture
1 Dec	Kindle K-5
	Harvest K-4 48 lbs Meat

Total for Season 1:

Broilers	200	@	5 lb =	1000 lbs
Ducks	150	@	3.5 lb =	525 lbs
Turkeys	25	@	18 lb =	350 lbs
Rabbits	64	@	3.5 lb =	225 lbs
Hogs	<u>4</u>	@	210 lb =	<u>840 lbs</u>
	<u>443</u>			<u>3000 lbs</u>

Plus another 180-200 dozen eggs... That, my friends, is a LOT of protein for a beginning homestead!

