

Part II



Our Homestead

Chapter VII

Why Homestead?

It was a warm, spring morning in the Tri-Cities of southeastern Washington in the heart of the Columbia basin desert. There were four of us enjoying the third year of the new millennium awaiting breakfast in an IHOP restaurant when the waitress came to take our order... When my turn came, I don't recall at this late date exactly what I ordered, but I do recall that it included, "two eggs, over easy..."



"Sir," she began, "we must warn you that food not fully cooked runs the risk of carrying food borne pathogen's..."

I stopped a moment to digest this warning... Thinking back to my youth, the first 13 years of which, were spent living on my grandfather's chicken ranch where he kept 13,000 laying hens and never having heard of such an outlandish idea. I looked at her and asked quietly, "Why?" Are you serving diseased eggs?"

She became rather indignant over that statement and she retorted immediately, "Why no, of course not!"

"Well," I responded, rather warming to the subject now and reveling in her discomposure, "If you aren't serving

diseased eggs, how would I get a food borne pathogen from them? If the bugs were on the silverware, it probably would not matter how long we cook the eggs, now would it?"

"Well, I never!" She retorted a bit more forcefully than I thought necessary and I really should have let it go there, but, truth old, I was enjoying myself way too much.

Upon hearing her exclamation, I smiled just slightly and replied, "I'm not sure I believe that anymore than your warning about self diseasing in eggs... But, please bring me two eggs over easy... And if they come any more than that, you can redo them until you get them right!"

By this time the waitress supervisor had overheard the conversation and had interceded to restore order... Our entire area of the restaurant was now watching and listening closely and she felt the need to defuse the situation before she lost either a waitress or four customers, not knowing the joy I was getting from the girl's discomposure.



When the girl had gone on about her business, the boss stayed on to make sure we were placated. She explained that the state inspection and food police

people had issued the edict that all customers ordering as I had were to be warned as I was... That much I can

understand and accept, but the why of it eluded me! Even this supervisor had no idea why.

Not comfortable with unsolved mysteries, I set out to find out what was at the root of this new procedure. What I found, after some diligent digging was that there had



been deaths caused by E. coli infections at a fast food restaurant in the Seattle area... E. coli carried on meat used to make hamburgers at this restaurant. At first, I simply said, "Oh, the restaurant was just dirty..." But that was not the case. The pathogens had been traced to the meat sold to the restaurant.

Further study showed that hamburger was not the only foods to be infected by this new super bug that was resistant to the antibiotics being used in massive doses to attempt to stem it. Eggs, too, we're showing signs of the same bugs! At that time, they had no idea, at least for publication, what was causing it... That took years more... And a much deeply dug hole!

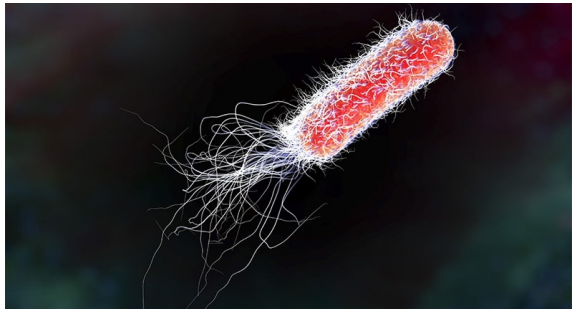
Ultimately, it was learned that the condition arose from how the animals were fed and raised. As we all know, cows have four stomachs, if you will... They are ruminants. They are designed by nature to eat and digest grass. They are herbivores... They eat... Then rest and regurgitate it to chew it more where it then goes to another stomach for further

digestion. Eventually all the nutrients are extracted and the waste is expelled out of the office provided for that purpose... And they are very prolific at this, eliminating as much as 50 pounds per day in waste.



They are not designed to eat grain... Especially not corn... But, corn is very high in calories so puts

weight on amazingly fast... Which means they could be sold more quickly than could a similar animal raised without corn. The big cattle producers know this and love this, so they put the cows in a concrete pen and pour the corn to them... And the cows eat... And poo... And so on,. The cows are spending their entire day eating corn and pooing while wading up to their knees in sloppy wet poo... A breeding ground for disease. All one must do to get the feeling of this is to drive near a cattle feedlot... Literally, thousands of head of cattle are doing the same thing... Eating and pooing... in their own filth. It is the unnatural diet of corn and or soy beans that causes the disease. University studies have shown that when an infected cow is returned to his natural regimen of grass, his own immune system will overcome the E. coli bug and it disappears.



Unfortunately, this cannot happen in our system because the process is entirely controlled by the few. In the 1970s the top

five producers, Swift and Company, John Morrell, Iowa Beef Products and the other two combined to control less than 25% of the market... Today, the top four, Tyson, Archer Daniels Midland, Smithfield and the other control over 80% of production and market!

The worst part is, these four control the USDA. By the judicious buying of congressman (they call it "donations to campaigns") the laws favor those and their methods.



Add to this, the fact that we have people in Congress who have not a clue about what happens in the real world. Recently, in her discussion of her bill in Congress to severely limit farm production through extreme eco-limitation designed to eliminate the small farmer, Ocasia Cortez stated "In America, we have no need for farmers, we have grocery stores!"



The real tragedy comes in the fact that she is, essentially, correct. Our farmers no longer grow the food that fills our grocery stores. The

average grocery supermarket will offer about 143,000 products for sale... produced by as little as 12 corporations in factory operations.

The same is true for the chickens that produced my eggs for that IHOP breakfast. They are reared in a barn type of affair that houses thousands of chickens that are crowded in so tightly they have no room to even roost. If one dies, it lays in the cage until the others in the cage eat it or it rots away.

The air is so foul that the workers are not allowed to enter the barn without full protective clothing! This is why I received the warning on my eggs... because they ARE diseased, or at least potentially diseased!

These are the whys for our homestead. Yes, there may be other benefits we look forward to, but what has been discussed is why growing our own food is so essential in the 21st-century.

Before we get into the mechanics of this, there are some things that need to be understood. First, we must understand that in this day of the internet warrior, there is a class of people who believe that being anonymous means that you can say or do anything you wish with complete impunity. In addition, a good number of these are militantly



against things that we, as food growers must do to survive.

One of the negatives the Internet has done, among all of the wonderful things, is that it has given voice to idiots! ...that class of people who, prior, had to stand on a soapbox in the park to be heard, now have access to a ready-made audience who are just as misdirected as they are. I could name names of homesteaders with an Internet presence who have had their lives threatened for taking the lives of their animals... That it is, they feel, vulgar and wrong to rear and butcher our own animals. Be aware of these people, but do not let them sway you from your course. You and your partner, if you have one, will decide on your own course and follow that course to your own goal!

You will find that this is a very unique course you have chosen, but there is a ton of help available to us online... www.youtube.com is rife with “how to” videos on virtually any aspect of our homesteading journey, from how to find your land, to how to dress your chickens and everywhere in between.

Now is the time for each of us to decide our own goals. What do we wish to achieve with our homestead?



Do we want to have a hobby farm type of operation where we keep our town job and raise a few animals and vegetables to supplement our food purchases or do we want to live on our farm full-time and draw a living from it as well?

How big do we want our operation to be? Will we only want to raise our own food, or are we planning to raise enough to sell to the public? If the latter, what are the laws we will have to meet in order to do this? These vary widely from state to state... and sometimes even from county to county within that state.

For example, in my state of Washington, I can apply for and obtain a permit to butcher up to 1000 chickens per year without having an inspected facility. This permit stipulates that these chickens must be sold on the farm, not in town nor even at a farmers market... That they must be picked up on the farm within four hours of butchering. Further, any birds going to a restaurant must be processed in a USDA inspected facility.

At this point we might think that this requirement is to insure food safety and that no contamination is allowed on our food... But we would be dead wrong in that thought. If public safety were the concern we would be able to sell our 1000 birds from the farm or would we be able to give away our birds anywhere we choose and to whomever we choose? No... if it were a food safety concern we would not be allowed such leeway... It is a set of laws brought by those “big four” we mentioned earlier to stifle competition and nothing more!

We must get inventive to operate legally with the government bureaucracy fully intact. There are usually ways to meet the letter of the law and still keep operating.

One example here was a young man in Oregon who had his processing area for his chickens in an open air venue... The

state of Oregon told him the law required that his processing area be enclosed with walls... "But I only do 100 chickens a year and I like doing them outside," he stated.



He was denied... So, he constructed a wall around the perimeter of his processing area that stood 8 inches tall and was wide open above that. He was granted his permit and has been operating "legally" ever since, simply because the law simply said "a wall" with no parameters attached thereto! This is bureaucracy at its finest.

In Washington one of the stipulations to obtain the exemption permit requires that any time processing the poultry is done after dark, light must be provided for those doing the processing... HUH? But I wanted to butcher chickens in the dark!

Yes, it sounds ridiculous, and it is... But it is how the law is written and it must be addressed.

At this time, some of us are wondering how we can get started... We are not debt-free yet and we are still living in town and have no property yet that we can use, so what can we do?

Let me answer that by stating... "A lot!" First, one need not own land to begin. Do we have a friend or family member who has an acre or two he is not using? If we offered to keep the fences in repair and the weeds down, would he let us grow a garden there and maybe some birds?

Lest we think it's not possible, for many years, I and my friends had horses we pastured year round



without owning property nor even renting it. We simply drove around and looked for vacant pastures and stopped in to talk to the people... It was amazing how many people loved the idea of having horses on their land without having to worry about fences nor having to concern them selves with the big weed abatement fines most counties have... Especially in suburban and semi suburban areas. I cannot



begin to tell how many of these people would ask us, when we were moving to the next pasture, if we would bring them back the next year... We

never lacked for ample acres. Even today, I can point you to people who control hundreds of acres this way. They run

sizeable cattle herds on hundreds of acres they don't own and pay little or nothing for it!

For our homestead farm, my recommendation is to rent or lease acreage... this is easily done for as the little as \$20 per acre per year up to about \$50 per acre per year on a five-year lease. The difference in price is determined by how the



property is set up... Is it adequately fenced around the perimeter? Does it have good access? Is water readily

available? Are there outbuildings available for our use? What is the quality of the land? How are the pastures?

I would venture to say, if I were to start on Monday to find my land, by Saturday I would have more than I could use!

In the model we will be using, we need to have no permanent infrastructure. If we were fully functioning, other than our garden, we could pick up and leave within three days time. Everything is portable... So, yes, we can easily operate on leased ground until we can find the ground we want where we want it.

Okay, we are prepared to use the 5 acres from uncle George, what do we do now? Again... We plan... What do we want our ultimate homestead to be? I am going to show my ideal

model and everyone else can scale their homestead from there.

My homestead when fully operational will be on 20 acres of usable pasture land. I will have rabbits, meat chickens, laying hens, ducks, geese, turkeys, beef cattle, pigs and a market garden. I will not have horses nor other exotics because they do nothing to add income and, in fact, are a cash drain to us.

I will have my home on my 20 acres, even if I have to find a used mobile home and install it there. Of course that will mean water, power and sewage in one form or another.

This is my plan and the illustration shows how it will be laid out.

