

## Autumn Transitional Thoughts

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September is such a transitional month for me. My 'to do' list is much longer as compared to my list in the spring. I empathize with the yellow jackets in their frantic behavior. It's time to batten down the hatches for winter but I still have my attention being drawn in many directions. For this reason, I have not been able to settle on just one topic for this month's newsletter. Bear with me as I 'talk out loud' on the subjects that are foremost in my mind.

September and October are the prime months for your pasture areas to renew their vigor. Taking your animals off these areas for a couple of months in the fall allows the root systems to regenerate prior to the rainy/snow season. This is also the time that you want to think about reseeding and applying fertilizer. Coyotes and other predators are a bigger problem in these months as well. Pups and kits are being weaned. They have been trained to hunt by their parents throughout the summer. Now that they are on their own they will be actively hunting with far less caution and will also be hunting in pairs or packs. This gives you two good reasons to pull in the herd to a secured area.

With the unsettled weather that comes with the autumnal months, also comes the possibility of pneumonia in your herd. I had a listless one yesterday. She was up and going out to the pasture but at feeding time she just didn't have the voracious appetite that the other kids were demonstrating. I had wormed her the first day that she was like this but on the second day she was still low energy so I gave her a shot of antibiotics. She is back to normal today. Sometimes the symptoms are subtle in the early stages of disease but if not treated can rapidly progress to a severely ill animal. This is the time when that 'herd health sheet' that I keep mentioning comes in very handy. That and having the supplies on hand to treat. I work long days during the week so any problems in my herd are usually noticed after all the feed stores are closed and the vet is home having dinner. If you have a work schedule like mine, having a lighted area to feed in makes life a whole lot easier. I have been working toward all of my animals feeding in the catch pen so that any treatment I have to do can be accomplished with a minimum of effort.

I have developed a system of worming my animals that works mainly on an 'as needed' basis. I have some that rarely need to be treated but the does do get wormed prior to kidding and at weaning time. The kids get wormed at weaning and then we keep a close eye out for weight gain and 'wet butts'. This might not be ideal in some farmer's eyes but it seems to work well for us. At a talk that I attended last year, the vet recommended to at least worm in the late fall and then again in the spring when the weather warms up. I have found in my own herd that it is better to follow the individuals at their stress times.

The bottom line though is to find a system that works for your herd and your area. Be knowledgeable about the chemicals that you use and heed the warning labels.

I have had the pleasure of Sadie's company for the last couple of months. She is a livestock guardian dog. I have not been enthusiastic about these dogs in the past but after watching her work, I see them as a necessity in the raising of goats. I have donkeys but they have not been effective in the way that a good LGD is. I have been looking for my own dog as Sadie is on loan and not for sale. They are expensive to get as experienced adults and scarce to boot. I am heading off to Montana next weekend to pick up a Great Pyrenees female that is in rescue there. I highly recommend these rescue organizations for a way to find a good dog. They are knowledgeable about their particular breed. The dogs are screened for bad habits and then put up for adoption with a realistic assessment of each dog's temperament and what type of situation that they will be able to succeed in. So many dogs that are out there for purchase are sold without full disclosure of their individual problems. If you are interested in pursuing the purchase of an LGD make sure that you do a lot of research beforehand. Because of their temperament and instinctual behavior, they can be a liability rather than an asset in the wrong hands. It is important to find dogs that are socialized in a way that they can be handled for grooming and vet care.

Hopefully all are happily and actively breeding at this time. In the next months, I will concentrate on our does as far as the late stages of pregnancy, preparing for kidding and the kidding process itself. Having some fresh, extra supplies on hand for this period will avoid last minute scrambles if problems arise.

I hope to see many of you at the Fall Pen Sale in Prineville. Mia Nelson will be bringing her temporary fencing set up. It is a presentation that is not to be missed for those of you that are still grappling with the issue of adequate fencing. She has spent several years developing her own system so the many pitfalls have already been addressed. I will be dragging my husband, Larry, over to the Sale. Mia's presentation will be mandatory for him to attend!!

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