

## **Detailed run-down of daily farm chores:**

**Laying hens:** We keep 2-3 flocks of laying hens, staggered at different ages, from 300-500 hens each. Each flock has their own house and moves with their own separate pasture fencing. Care involves feeding & watering, collecting and carrying eggs (multiple times a day). Moving fences and hen houses (twice a week).

**Cleaning eggs:** sorting, washing, packing (daily) and deliveries (2-3 x/week). We get anywhere from 40-60 doz eggs/day (varies by season)

**Broilers:** We raise about 5,000 broilers a year, spread out in groups of 600 at a time, beginning in April and ending in October. We stick to a strict rotating schedule of chicks arriving by mail and processing days that is all planned out during the winter, and much of our farm calendar revolves around these days.

**Brooder care:** caring for chicks in the brooder (twice a day) until they are transferred out to the field. We typically get chicks in the mail once every 2 weeks from April-August. They are kept in the brooder for about the first 3 weeks.

**Caring for broiler chickens on the field:** moving and servicing broiler pens and broiler houses, feed & water (twice a day). Broilers are moved out to the field at about 3 weeks old, and are moved daily until butcher time, at about 7 weeks old. Since we get chicks every 2 weeks we are on a constantly rotating schedule of brooders and pens, with multiple ages of birds at a time.

**Pigs:** We raise about 70 hogs a year (one group in the spring, one in the fall, about 35 each time, though some of them may overlap for a month or 2). Care involves feed and water (twice a day), moving pasture (house & fencing) twice/week. Some are pre-sold and go to a local butcher in May & October. The rest are hauled on a 3 hour trip to a USDA butcher to be sold by the cut from out freezers.

**Rabbits:** The rabbits are a very small enterprise, We only keep about 6-8 does which birth about every 3-4 months. Care involves scything grass, feed and water twice a day. Butchering is about once every 2 months, much less involved than poultry processing, usually done in a morning.

**Ducks:** We raise 2 groups of ducks, one in the spring and one in the fall, only about 300 in total, as the processing is much more labor-intensive than the broilers. Care is the same system as the broilers.

**Turkeys:** We get turkey poults in early Aug, and raise about 400 per year. They are in the brooder about 4 weeks, shift to broiler pens for a week or 2, then to an open pasture system similar to the layers. Care involves feed, water, and fence moving, etc, and long days of butchering (see below).

**Sheep:** Currently we have about 35-40 ewes, they lamb once/year, ideally in May as the grass is at its prime. Care includes daily fence moving, moving portable house about twice/week,

keeping water filled. During lambing season (May-June) tagging lambs and keeping track of all stats. In the fall we wean all lambs and move them to a separate pasture.

**Milk Cow:** we currently have one milk cow for our own personal use. We milk her only once/day due to our sanity. If you're interested in learning to milk by hand you will get a chance!

**Feed:** the sheep are 100% grass-fed, but all other animals rely on some form of grain feed in addition to pasture. We have feed custom-mixed at a local mill, and this involves trips to pick it up 2-3 times per week along with unloading & stacking upon return. Frequent refilling of the feed barrels out on the field is also necessary and a part of everyday chores involving the hogs, layers and broilers, etc. Thus the need to be able to handle a lot of 50 lb feed sacks.

**Poultry Processing:** We operate an open-air on-farm poultry processing facility (we have a custom producer-processor exemption in VA). We currently butcher chickens on a 2-week rotating schedule, Thursdays & Mondays from June-Oct. This is a long day of set-up, cleaning, butchering, and lots more cleaning. We typically butcher 250-300 broilers in a morning. Afternoons involve packaging, labeling, & customer sales on top of everyday chores. The days following butchering days (Fridays & Tuesdays) are cutting days when we part chickens and package by cut. This involves assembly-line style cutting, packaging, weighing, labeling and shuttling to the freezers. (Not every week, so it is Thurs/Fri and Mon/Tues followed by an 8 day break...)

Thanksgiving time also means 5 or 6 more days of processing turkeys, spread out from the end of October right up to Thanksgiving.

These processing days are an essential part of our farming operation and are a mandatory part of the apprenticeship - attendance is required and non-negotiable. Although the days are long and tiring, with a good team of workers we have a pretty good time with the music on and lots of conversation & joking, topped off by group lunch.

**On-Farm Sales:** In addition to poultry processing days when many customers come to the farm, we also have a small "store" that is open Wednesdays & Saturdays (and other days by appointment) There is not heavy traffic, but you can expect to assist with sales fairly often.

**Farmers Market:** We participate in 2 farmers markets on Saturday, one on Wednesday, and occasionally on Tuesday as well. These involve packing coolers and vehicle, driving to Blacksburg (50 minute drive) (or Floyd, 20 minutes) setting up, interacting with customers & sales from 8-2, break down, drive home, unpack.

**Other work:** composting, mowing, lots and lots of portable fence set-up and moving, some garden work, cleaning out bedding from brooder & hoop-houses, driving to mill for feed pick-up and unloading, and more.

If this interests you please get in touch!

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