



Happy Friday, Farm Friends! Hello February!

What a Week!



On Wednesday, we said goodbye to our faithful, hard-working Farmy. He had been with us before we even officially moved here from New Mexico. Ray bought him in October 2008 from a local used car dealer that had sold Cheryl's parents a few cars. It was a 2001 Ford Ranger. Cheryl saw it for the first time when Ray picked her up at the airport in Raleigh.

Farmy hauled countless loads of potatoes, garlic, and fertilizer, and ferried us to market, around the farm, to town and to the dump. He was a very hard worker, indeed -- always available to do anything, anywhere 24/7. Until lately.

The rigors of the job plus his advancing age started to catch up with him. We were spending more time (and money) at Stokes Tire for repairs. Lots of repairs. Even the door handles were replaced multiple times. We replaced his

transmission in 2017 which got us through 5 more years, but it went out again in January. It was time.

For those who buy vehicles frequently, maybe it's not so hard. But for us, it is very hard. We had a few very particular needs and the list of things that we did not want (but would accept) was even longer. Trying to find a simple small truck with 4-wheel drive, an extended cab, towing capacity and a 6' bed shouldn't be that hard. But it is.

After about 3 weeks of very intensive searching and extensive spreadsheet building, Ray found a truck. In Lynchburg.

In this day of Carvana and their car vending machines, we are old school. We still need to touch the vehicle and drive it before we seal the deal. So on Wednesday, we took Farmy to Lynchburg. We had everything in place in case the truck would work but we were prepared to drive away with Farmy if it didn't.

It worked. So now we are the proud owners of a 2019 Chevy Colorado. It feels too pretty to use, but we are sure that it will have its mud baptism soon. Thank goodness the floor is vinyl and not carpet!

It has just about everything we wanted (and a bit more). The only thing it doesn't have? A name! Can you help us come up with one? Suggestions please!



## Field Walk

Let's take a quick look around at some of the things happening at the farm this week, shall we?



Now is the time to be weeding and pruning our bramble plantings to get them ready for the coming season. We have been so pleased at how well the landscape fabric has kept the weeds at bay in the blackberries, especially in the beds that have only an opening for the plant. Yes, grass will still pop up but it's nowhere as invasive as it is with less coverage.



Before



After

Another major task has been to get the animals' paddocks to be less of a mud pit. With the persistent rain and cooler weather, they have not been able to dry out and the animals are swimming through muck. It's not healthy and it's dangerous.

A stopgap measure is to try to keep the area around the barn well-trenched so that water flows away. We have done so much drainage work there, but it



never seems to last for very long. Especially in these extremely wet conditions.



Mia says that she approves!



The sheep paddock has been the worst ever. There's a 2-inch layer of super slippery mud everywhere. We are putting down hay on the ground to absorb some of the moisture and have added several pallets as a raft. Fingers crossed that this helps!



## What Do Farmers Do in the Winter?



Plan! We cleared the walls in the living room and broke out the flipchart paper and post-its to tackle some critical planning. What crops? What events? What website changes? And lots more.

It is essential that we have a good plan going into the season. Otherwise we aren't ready and it sets off a chain reaction of sadness: we won't have plants ready when they need to go into the field and then they won't be ready to harvest when we need them for PlumFresh and market. Not a good outcome!

Here's a good example: we want to have early tomatoes (late May). That means that they needed to be seeded by 1/17 and then they will be potted up to 4" pots on 2/17 and will be transplanted into one of our high tunnels by 3/17 and will start producing the first tomatoes by 5/21. (if we're good little farmers and the creek don't rise!)

I think we are on the way...



That's the news for this week, Friends! As we brace for a burst of cold weather over the weekend, we can take comfort in the fact that Spring is just 44 days away! We can look forward to the 2nd Full Moon of 2023 -- the [Full Snow Moon](#) on Sunday, February 5.



Before we go, here's an important reminder: Today is [National Go Red for Women Day](#) which is a day to emphasize the importance of cardiovascular health for women. Although heart disease is typically thought of as a "man's disease," thousands of women die each year as a result of heart attacks. In fact, cardiovascular disease kills 1 in 3 women! I know, because my mother, Irene Ferguson, was one of those women. Ladies, awareness is essential and men, we know there is a special woman in your life -- make sure she takes care of her heart!



American Heart Association.



Until next week,  
*Cheryl & Ray*

