

Merry Christmas 2019!

Whoa!! How can it possibly be close to the end of another year, not to mention another decade? Sit back, grab a beverage and hopefully, enjoy reading what's been happening this year at Dry Creek Ranch!



Some of our spring calves enjoying the sunshine in May

After wildfires and extreme drought in 2017 and 2018, it was a real shocker to have an extremely wet summer and most of the fall. It meant that our livestock enjoyed wonderfully rich pastures this year – that is – where they could reach the grass as there was so much flooding on our meadows! And the rainy weather made for extremely challenging haying conditions. Mother

Nature didn't offer too many stretches of sunny weather to allow us to put up hay. We were not able to cut any of our lowland hayfields as they were under water! Even our hay lease was extremely wet. I was only able to cut around 60% of our lease. The next challenge was getting those round bales off the field without getting stuck in the mud or causing huge ruts in the fields. We've never experienced such adverse conditions in our lives! In the end, we did manage to get the hay off the fields and bring it home to our gang.

We had a decent calf crop this spring, but because of the lack of hay for this winter, we decided to ship all of our calves again this year. We did well at the auctions, though this year for the first time in 5 years, we didn't top the sale. We aren't complaining, though, as prices continue to be very favourable for cattle ranchers.



Lynx tracks in the snow, next to the dogs' running tracks.

I was very grateful for my job again this year as a Community Wellness Manager. The good pay allowed us to replace our aging Kuhn mower with a brand new model. It didn't get much of a workout this year – I think I only put 16 hours of cutting hay on it due to the adverse weather conditions. Oh well, we'll have a nice mower for at least the next 10 to 15 years of haying. The job was quite demanding of my time once again this year. It made me realise that I'm no "spring chicken" and the fulltime work, along with many weekends and some weeknight activities, still doing research and trying to run a farm was getting to be too much. I was very grateful when the contract ended on December 1st. I might actually stay retired this time!

That being said, I am still collaborating on a few research projects – one from my old lab at SFU and a few others at the inherited arrhythmia clinic and the HiRO network (Hearts in Rhythm Organization) at St. Paul's

Hospital. I'm also still consulting for the coroner's office and still get the odd "found remains" consulting case with the police when people find bones out in the bush. In fact, I just got called out to a case right now. There's never a dull moment!

I was able to take some time off this June to fly back to Ontario for my Mom's 95th birthday. Aren't we fortunate to have a feisty, busy, active and healthy 95 year old Mom? It was a blast to go back for a visit. I rented a car so we spent our time driving up to see Randy and Sharon, all 5 "kids" and the grandkids. We also had a wonderful visit over dinner with Greg and Norma Jean, Terry, Erin, Sean and Kaylyn, and Jess, Steve, Carling and Calder. It was shocking to see how much those kids have grown and all the things they are accomplishing. What a blessing to have dinner with 4 generations of family!

Weather-wise, after a dismally wet cool summer and early fall, the weather this November and so far in December has been spectacular! We've had very little snow until this week and with some cooler weather (we had a few nights of -20 C), we have wonderful ice cover on all of our lakes. And that means no snowshoeing

yet, but great ice fishing conditions! Yahoo! I've been out 4 times already since late November. It's been nice to put some fish in the freezer – both lovely trout for us and suckers and other “junk” fish species to cook up for the dogs and barn cats. Nothing gets wasted here at the ranch!

Similar to last year, we've had many windy days, so we've had hundreds of trees come down on the fences. Although Perry's health remains very good, we hired a very competent and hard-working young man to help clear fence lines. He, like many people around here, lost his job at one of our local saw mills. Sadly, the 2017 wildfires continue to have huge impacts locally – all 3 of our local mills have either completely shut down or substantially reduced their staff due to loss of wood fibre. We also have life-threatening mudslides that close our major highways whenever there is heavy rainfall. You can imagine my job as a Wellness Manager was very busy this year again.

Thankfully Perry's health allows him to continue to do the work that needs doing around here. It's a fulltime job keeping up with machinery maintenance and repairs, shipping hay, feeding livestock, etc. His main job lately is the annual bringing in of firewood. The wet and windy conditions delayed many fall projects, so we are still bringing in our winter firewood. We burn around 6 or 7 cords of wood per year as it is our only heat source at the ranch and I also cook with it. We love the warmth of a wood-burning stove!

My horse continues to be a real pleasure to ride and chum around with. I didn't get as many opportunities to ride as I liked thanks to the demanding job and dismal weather, but I'm looking forward to more riding next year, as well as the odd little ride this winter – weather permitting, of course!



The new Kuhn mower finally getting to work on the hay fields (Sept)

Life continues to be so very rewarding here at the ranch. We'll see how long retirement lasts this time, but for the time being, it's been wonderful to have the time to get things done around here, get back to spinning and knitting wool, making soap and other satisfying projects. Both houses are also looking a bit cleaner these days. We are so grateful to have good health and a great life!



We put in a new-to-us dock at Green Lake. Looking forward to using it way more often next year!

I do hope you have a wonderful, restful Christmas holiday and all the best in health and happiness for you in 2020 and the new decade.

Much love and hugs to y'all,

Laura, Perry, Vicky, Midge, Guy, Chico the barn cat and Waylon the shop cat. And Buddy the horse!