



Educational Farm & Nature Preserve

Farm Connection by Pauline Scott Farm & Nature Guide & Board of Trustees

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IN-PIG SOW “FRANCES” MAKES DEBUT AT STRATFORD ECOLOGICAL CENTER

Last month I shared that the vista at Stratford Ecological Center on Liberty Road was green, green, green; this month I can add that the green growth has become thick, thick, thick. The hot and humid weather in mid-May, followed by a little rain, at the end of the month, and then daily showers from the first of June for ten days acted like a dose of plant steroids.

The first cutting of hay was a challenge, as it took five days to dry, with the last of the 369 bales stored in the loft on Saturday afternoon, May 22. After a limited 2020 hay harvest our stocks were exhausted, and we began immediately feeding the new bales to the livestock in the barn.

The clutch went out on the bigger of our two tractors, the 2955 John Deere. It is not going to be an easy repair, as the engine requires splitting open to gain access. At this time of the year there are a number of tractor repairs ahead of us at Parrott Implement Company in Richwood. We have our fingers crossed it will be back in time for the second hay cutting.

Frances, our 500-pound black Berkshire/Duroc sow arrived from New Philadelphia, Ohio on June 1, looking travel weary and appearing imminently ready to give birth. We were expecting another sow the week before Frances's arrival, but she suddenly farrowed and needed to stay home! Frances actually waited a week before giving birth to nine live piglets.

When Frances farrowed, farmhand Pete was in the barn and climbed into the pen to ensure a piglet was not squashed. Frances grumbled but was not aggressive and Pete retreated safely. Within minutes he was back in the pen tending to two piglets who were not breathing. He revived one by tapping on his chest, and yet another by dunking him in water. Pete, a past fire chief, was declared a hero by those watching the birth. Their color ranges from solid black to pink to multi-colored. This is Frances' fifth pregnancy, one more than the average sow, and she is not producing enough milk. Her feed is being supplemented by our goat milk, and the piglets are trying to suckle, and sup either goat or powdered milk from a creep feeder.

Fifty farm camp counselors aged 13 and up spent three days in training during the first week of June, prior to the start of camp on June 7. The number was much higher than usual as 50% of them missed attending their final year of farm camp due to Covid and wanted to return. The six Senior Counselors will remain with us for the nine weeks of camp, while each Junior spends two weeks. Once more the farm felt truly alive again as energy flowed between the counselors as they reunited with their former camp friends.

Alexis and Katelyn began their agriculture internship on June 1. Alexis graduated with a Bachelor's in Communications and Katelyn will graduate with a Bachelor's in Biology. Both have a deep interest in animals but little knowledge of farm animals or operating a farm and hope to remedy this by spending the summer under Farmer Jeff's guidance. They appreciate his instruction and explanation why they are to do a certain task. An important assignment is a daily count of the animals and observing their well-being. They now know

that after a wet day in the fields all the sheep walk back to the barn bobbing their heads and plodding through the mud, but very few require attention for lameness. They enjoy that every day is different and leave with a feeling of satisfaction. What more can a green intern desire!

The big greenhouse has been re-planted with summer vegetables, with the credit going to the Tuesday women gardeners. A hundred tomato plants in field 2 and corn in the east half of field 5 remain to be planted. The squash and green beans on the west edge of field 2 are sprouting; the spelt is healthy and the pastures include an abundance of nutritious nitrogen-fixing red clover. Farmer Jeff is practicing a system called prescribed grazing, involving the use of smaller fenced areas for maximum efficiency using the New York Conservation Practice Standard. In so doing we meet the requirements of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and receive a grant.

Stratford is open by registration only every Saturday from 9-1 pm. through August. With the lifting of Covid regulations we hope by fall to have more opportunities for people to visit us. Meanwhile, stay cool and enjoy the official start of summer.

Pauline Scott is a farm and nature guide at Stratford Ecological Center, 3083 Liberty Road, Delaware. She can be reached at 740 363 2548 or by email at info@stratfordecologicalcenter.org Stratford's website is www.StratfordEcologicalCenter.org

Stratford Ecological Center
3083 Liberty Road • Delaware • Ohio • 43015
740-363-2548 • info@stratfordecologicalcenter.org
www.stratfordecologicalcenter.org