

The Farm Weekly

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BLUEBIRDHILLS@VOYAGER.NET

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NASHVILLE IS HOT & HUMID

I drove down to Nashville on Tuesday, and casually looked at the thermometer in the car when I saw the "smog alert" sign flashing over Interstate 65. It read 101, which was a bit of a shocker after leaving cool and rainy Springfield.

The rain was sort of welcomed. We would prefer that all rain begin at approximately 7:00 PM and end by midnight so that it has all soaked into the ground before work starts the next day. As I left, Tim had just come in from picking this week's onions. As I commented that the rain was great for the pastures, he just grumbled.

Actually Tuesday was an improvement over Monday. Our big tractor had a flat tire acquired when the stem was torn from the inner tube on Saturday afternoon, and then the smaller tractor Luke was to use to cultivate wouldn't start. As Tim drove the newly repaired tractor out to the field, he found that the spare tire

had fallen from its perch under the pickup truck. While I would have thrown up my hands, returned to the house and crawled back into bed with the covers over my head, Tim just shrugs his shoulders and gets to fixing things, only grumbling a bit. It often amazes me how he can keep going when faced with the trials inherent in farming.

I called home tonight to find out how everyone was getting along without me, secretly and selfishly hoping that they would be pining away for their Mum. Instead I found out that all was well with everyone, but Tim who sounded a bit weary. He reported that the refrigerator truck is not cooling down once again. Tomorrow will be its 4th or 5th visit to the mechanics who specialize in such vehicles to try once again to effect a successful repair. Coupled with that frustration is the fact that the vegetables just aren't performing up to expecta-

tions. The tomatoes are all trained up their trellises and well weeded, but they just aren't putting on fruit.

Tim can't put his finger on what is wrong, but across the board things seem a bit slow and lethargic. Perhaps it is secondary to all the cool weather we experienced earlier, or maybe the additional moisture, but hopefully everything will kick into gear and start churning out the way they are supposed to.

Tim did harvest something new for this summer and has that in the boxes. Collards are the big leafy green bundle of vitamins. I am afraid that since I am down in Nashville, I do not have access to my special books with tips for preparation, but you can certainly pickup your cookbooks at home or go on line for information. Since I'm in Nashville, I should probably just step outside the hotel to ask a local, but it is late and I have just enough energy left to crawl into bed.

The fiber clinic is going fairly well. I am discovering how much I still have to learn and how much we do not know about these animals and their fiber. It is rather interesting as we have some pretty spectacular folks with us including my good friend Janie Hicks from Coolaroo Alpaca Stud near Sydney, Australia. This grand gal spent 10 months in Peru, trekking with a guide from

ranch to ranch performing skin biopsies on alpacas and then sending them back to a merino sheep expert for analysis to count the number of hair follicles per square millimeter.

This research has added a new dimension to selection of traits for breeding and is very exciting. She is also the first breeder to utilize embryo transfer in Australia, so it is a great privilege to have struck up a friendship with such a great person.

Today we spent the day trying to train our eyes to differentiate between various microns of fiber. The finest fiber we examined today had a micron of about 16.8 which is barely visible to the naked eye, and relatively invisible to my eyes wearing glasses! The coarsest fleece had a micron of 36. The importance of all this is that the fleece with lower micron is softer and is less likely to irritate the skin, making you feel itchy when you wear a garment made from low micron fiber.

Tomorrow we will hone our skills at evaluating the consistency of the fiber characteristics from one end of the fleece to the next, as well as the reflective or lustrous nature of a fleece that will ultimately give a garment a shiny or silky appearance.

Boring for you and my family, but fascinating for the 30 of us attending! Have a wonderful weekend and thanks for getting this off the web as opposed to picking it up with your boxes.

This Week's Box

Lettuce
Summer Squash?
Eggplant?
Walla Walla Onions
Green Pepper
Potatoes
Tomatoes
Collards

Next Week

Onions
Lettuce
Squash
Tomatoes
Potatoes