



The True Country Life

I've always loved the country and animals, and hoped to have a small farm someday

By Ginnie Baker

I live in rural north-central Ohio, near the village of Bellville. It's the kind of town that makes you feel you're in a Norman Rockwell print when you walk down Main Street.

I've always loved the country and animals, and hoped to have a small farm someday. That became reality eight years ago when I built my home on five acres not too far from town.

My partner, John, and I both worked as managers at a major telecommunications company. Both of us did some traveling for our jobs and after a while that became a chore.

Then it happened. I was downsized out of my job. I worked in public relations and was the primary speechwriter for the president of our local five-state area who was also downsized out of a job. It should have been a depressing time, but instead I found myself happier than I'd been in a long time!

We knew that the loss of our jobs could happen at any time and had started preparing for a change in lifestyle before it actually happened. We trimmed costs wherever we could and discovered we really didn't miss much—like the carry-out every Friday night. We also discovered that we made too many unnecessary shopping trips, using gas and spending money on nonessential items. As we trimmed expenses, we discovered that we really didn't know where all the money had been going, but we didn't miss it.

I worked at several other jobs, but longed to live the true country life, able to maintain my large organic, heirloom vegetable garden and can and freeze the fruits of my labor. Now was the time! After two years as editor of our local newspaper, I retired for good and really started to settle in to the new life I had discovered. As we suspected, John was also downsized, so we were both suddenly early retirees. He immediately fell into the country life and even when he was offered another full-time job, he turned it down. Trimming expenses early made the transition a lot easier.

Our friends who still work tell us we smile too much now that we are out of the rat race of the telecommunications industry. It's probably very true because life has changed dramatically for us. Gone are the business suits and dress-casual clothes. I used to drive into town in my good blue jeans and nice jacket in my very clean SUV. Now I head into town in our old Ford F-150 pick-up truck, my work jeans, muddy boots and an old jacket to pick up feed. It's the outfit that all of us out on the farm seem to wear!

We recently had a large, two-story barn built on the back of the property and started planning for the animals I've always wanted to raise. My constant companion is my Golden Retriever, Millie, but I started thinking about other types of animals. I did some reading and saw several programs on raising miniature donkeys—I was hooked!

Enter Samson and Delilah, my two miniature donkey weanlings who are seven and eight months old now. I met Samson when he was only three weeks old and it was love at first sight! He immediately captured my heart, but he had to have a companion. So off we went to see little Delilah on a neighboring farm. She was eight weeks old when we met her and a very shy little girl. I've discovered that, like potato chips, you can't have just one! They are very social animals and need company, so it's recommended that you always have at least two. It was a hard wait with a lot of visits, but when they were old enough, they joined us on our small farm.

What a change in our lives. We used to take it easy in the morning, walking the dog, having a leisurely breakfast, reading the paper. Now, it's up early, feed and walk Millie, and head to the barn to feed Samson and Delilah. They're always waiting with their noses poking through the stall bars, excited for their morning hug and breakfast. With that done, we eat and head back out to the barn to do the daily chores of mucking the stall and cleaning the barn.

I had an idea that country life would be great, but this is all I expected and more! Over the years we have lived here, we have developed a close friendship with neighbors who have a large farm up the road. John helps bale hay, we take over their farm chores when they have to go out of town and they help us with anything we need or aren't equipped to handle. They raise organically fed cattle and hogs, so we have a ready source for the best beef and pork around.



It's a totally different life than I'd experienced previously. We have coyotes, red fox, deer by the dozens, and rabbits, squirrels, woodchucks and raccoons.

We all help each other with a true feeling of camaraderie, caring for our farms, no matter how large or small. We are all concerned about current issues such as NAIS and the impact it will have on the small farmer. We're concerned about the breakup of farms into housing developments. And we want to keep this special lifestyle for our children and grandchildren for many generations to come.

We are new to the farm life and have found a new respect for the farmers who work from sun-up to sun-down, and longer, to keep their farms productive. We are proud to have been accepted by our neighbors as fellow farmers and wouldn't give up this life for anything.

Ginnie Baker will receive apparel from Mahindra for submitting her Reader Resumé.