

Wednesday, June 4, 2008

Chickens

Hooray! We have chickens. At last I have the utter joy of going out in the morning to let out " My Girls!" and peek into the nesting boxes and see if there is an egg-Bliss!!!

Rosie and I went on a mission and purchased 4 lovely brown hens ,we did rather like the idea something a little fancier however "Farmer McDonald" only had brown hens in so that was that. I must say I have had Bantams, Wyandotte, Bluebells, Blackrockâ€™s etc but our brown hens have proved to be very very friendly.

I was meant to have a hen house for my 40th but time slipped by and now at 42 years old I had to take matters into my own hands. The boys were out and Rosie and I found the old puppy kennel. We reckoned with a bit of TLC it could be a very fine ,if not rather small hen house. We set forth with great enthusiasm... but we soon realized we were getting a bit out of our depth a call to our lovely local joiner was required. Stuart laughed he said "how long have I got to attach the roofing felt, Give it a door and add some legs?â€™ Rosie then declared we were off to Haydon bridge to Farmer McDonald to collect the hens now " No pressure "then he replied! Stuart was a star and rose to the challenge I had a funny feeling even though we offered to help that he would most probably be happier on his own. We left to get the chickens and Stuart said to call and collect the hen house on our way back.

Farmer McDonald is a fantastic character and not only did we collect our hens but we had a great time seeing his horses and pigs etc.....we set off with our four hens "coffee, cream, coco and caramel" in a box in the boot.

We dashed back and collected the little house and excitedly filled the nest boxes with straw and put our chickens in their new home.

I wasnâ€™t too sure how Charles would react but he laughed not only at the fact we had got chickens but at the fact Rosie and I had made a puppy kennel into a hen house.

All was well the electric fence on the chicken happy until one dark night and Foxy loxy the swine got in and got two of my chickens not only did he do that he left my favourite one Caramel with a hole in her thigh!!!! However with some TLC and some magic antiseptic spray we have she was remarkably perky.

We were thrilled that caramel was bright eyed the next day and we decided to replace our lost chickens firstly so our existing chickens would mix with them as soon as possible and also so that the Fox wouldnâ€™t get the better of us.

Another trip to Farmer McDonald followed and this time we got three hens a little older and already laying. Farmer McDonald was busy as his Mare was foaling and we were helped by a very charming young chap who we got chatting to. He must have noticed that I had " Il take any poor sad creature" stamped on my forehead as he remarked "we have just got three Ducks in have you seen them?".....

You guessed it we took a few glances at these dear little Call ducks that were very dirtyâ€™ they will look great after a bath " he said.

He was true to his word for sure enough we put them in the stable with a big heap of straw and water and a very handsome Drake emerged with two beautiful white ducks and a pale "duck egg blue" egg!!!!

This minor lapse in my sense of reason resulted in a major effort on the carpentry front as we then had to convert a large "Log box" we had into a bigger hen house so that the Ducks could have the old smaller one as their house. Hector set to work with a friend and what resulted was short of a miracle inside...five nesting boxes. pillars made from some spare staircase spindles with perches on top, a divided area to eat with lovely arch doorways and a great drawbridge

style door Perfect.!

The Ducks also got a half barrel sunk into the ground to swim about in....

Now behind the electric fence live in harmony. Poppy, Ruby the pigs with five hens and three ducks. The hens are all laying now and we have had five beautiful blue duck eggs. I feel very lucky indeed.

Posted by Charles & Dee in Dee's diary, Southlands Farm News at 14:54