

# SHANNON BROOK FARM

ORGANIC • PASTURE-RAISED • LOCALICIOUS  
CHICKEN & LAMB

2566 Jennings Road, Watkins Glen, NY 14891-9625 • 607.731.1840 • [www.ShannonBrookFarm.com](http://www.ShannonBrookFarm.com) • [shannon@ShannonBrookFarm.com](mailto:shannon@ShannonBrookFarm.com)

## Shannon Brook Farm Newsletter

August 10, 2013

### Water from above and below ground

Through the recent torrential rainstorms we continued to work on the farm's infrastructure, which will in turn, make raising poultry, eggs, pork and lamb an easier and more manageable process. As the general contractor was wrapping up his roofing work, the well driller pulled into the driveway. Over the past two years we have learned to not be taken by surprise when people show up days or even weeks earlier, or later, than planned. If we're ready to have the work done and they are here we move ahead.

We had gone through the process of choosing the well driller over the previous six months, calling people who were in the business, meeting with the more hopeful prospects, talking to people who live in the area about which company they think does a good job and mulling over the two methods of well drilling that are being used in this region.

After selecting the well driller we started to hash out where to drill. We considered a few factors that were easy to actually see and then there were all the other invisible aspects of the job that took living on the property for a couple years to have a sense of, which also guided our decision-making in an important way.

The main considerations in choosing the well site were first, placing it a required distance from the underground septic tank to avoid contamination and second, locating it a good distance from the existing house well so we weren't drawing from the same source of water that we were already tapping.

Then we needed to consider where to house the pressure tank so that it wouldn't freeze in the winter. We went back and forth between housing the tank in the pole barn, which is not insulated, or in the basement of the house. The pole barn was closer to the well head but we'd have to build an insulated box to keep the water flowing during the winter. The recommended method of heating the interior of the box was an incandescent light bulb. So, what happens in the dead of winter when the farmer is happily sleeping away and the power goes out in the middle of the night? Or the light bulb burns out? OK...so the tank goes in the basement. Frozen water lines and hundreds of sheep in below freezing weather is something to be avoided! Livestock consume vast amounts of water in cold weather. They can eat snow but it is hard on small lambs. And what about the years when we have freezing weather and no snow?

Once we had decided on housing the pressure tank in the basement we had to collectively make a mental map of the existing underground water and electric lines in order to make more decisions. This is where having lived here for a couple of years was valuable. We had observed, on various occasions, the way the water flowed from the well to the house and back out to the chicken coop. We also knew that the existing underground water line leaked as we had seen the water seeping into the basement. We knew that some of the electric lines went from the house, along the deck, underground to the shed, under a concrete pad to a generator. Although this may all sound mundane it felt like high-drama as the well

# SHANNON BROOK FARM

ORGANIC • PASTURE-RAISED • LOCALICIOUS

CHICKEN & LAMB

2566 Jennings Road, Watkins Glen, NY 14891-9625 • 607.731.1840 • [www.ShannonBrookFarm.com](http://www.ShannonBrookFarm.com) • [shannon@ShannonBrookFarm.com](mailto:shannon@ShannonBrookFarm.com)

driller could accidentally cut through various water and electric lines without a good mental map.

Having sorted through what seemed to be invisible aspects of the project over the course of a week, the well driller got to the actual drilling. He asked us if we thought there was rock below ground in the orchard where he planned to drill. We said we thought not. Why would we say such a thing as we have never dug there? The previous years we had two different fencers on the property, enclosing 60 acres of pasture. Each time they came to report to us what they were working on we listened intently to their stories of what they had encountered. It gave us a sense of where on the farm the rock was appearing close to the surface and where they came across clay and gravel deposits. Fortunately the well driller thought to ask us what we understood about the land.

For two days we heard the massive engine on the driller's truck running the auger that bore down through the wet clay. This went on for hours through the heavy downpours that came from the sky. As I worked around the farm I kept thinking the worst...they might not find water, they may hit a thick ledge of slate, they may give up and have to move to a new location, essentially starting over. These things happen when drilling wells so I was preparing myself for the worst. I said to Walter that I would be happy to have some news from the driller on the second day, good, bad or indifferent. Walter said it would be alright as they had lowered the pipe that serves as the well casing into the hole. Sure enough they had hit a strong vein of good, clean water. We were hoping for a minimum of 4 gallons per minute but got 8 gallons per minute. It felt like we had struck gold. Lucky dogs, we are! Lucky dogs!

Moving forward the well drilling crew continues to excavate, laying water lines that will serve the various pastures and, in turn, the animals. Although we may have a few hairy moments moving forward we are on the downhill slope. Our focus and energies can turn to other aspects of the operation, such as raising good, clean food for our community for the remainder of the growing season.



New well head in the old orchard



Cecil inspecting the trench



Johnnie on watch with her flock