



Dry Creek Ranch

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Yes, that IS a little black pup
beside Vicki in the tractor!

Merry Christmas 2011!

Here's to yet another year that has just flown by. I hope this news arrives before Christmas, but once again, it's been a hectic Fall and early Winter. I'm just glad to be able to spend time at home during the holidays!

The graduate work is going at a snail's pace. Much of my work relies on other agencies and their cooperation, so I spend much of my time compelling them to participate in the research. That being said, I finally had some decent results to present at conferences this year. The highlight was being nominated for the Richard Rowe Research Prize in pediatric cardiology at the Canadian Cardiovascular Conference this October in Vancouver. I was one of 6 people nominated for this prestigious award. I didn't win it, but just being nominated was a great honour! I also published a chapter for a cardiology book this summer on cardiomyopathy. The hard cover copy should be coming in the mail any day now and an online version will also be released soon. I have one more study I am putting together; after which I hope to graduate, most likely in 18 months or so. There is a light at the end of the tunnel after all! The good news now is that I've been able to do more work (mainly writing) at home. I'm still enjoying teaching the online Human Anatomy course although I'm not taking on as many teaching contracts to concentrate on graduating.

Our family has grown this year with the addition of a nearly solid black Australian Shepherd/Border Collie cross pup in September. "Midge" is now nearly 5 months old and is a wonderful playmate for Vicki who has been doing most of the training. Midge was house-broken by 9 weeks of age, quickly learning to ring a bell to go outside, just like her big sister! She is still very small, so we'll have to wait and see whether she'll be big enough for a stock dog for us.

In terms of ranch work, being home more often has also meant being able to climb into a tractor for haying season. Perry cleared more land this Spring and we planted more upland hay. We were blessed with lots of rain early in the season, which meant a bumper crop on both our hay leases and at home. Unfortunately, one of our hay contracts was flooded out, likely from a dam breaking down from all the rain. Even in late September, the fields were too wet to drive on. We had nearly quadruple the hay crop at our Buffalo Creek hay

lease (see photo below), so we were not desperate for hay. The only disappointment is that our region is still facing tough economic times and many people have sold or given away livestock (imagine buying good horses for 5 cents per pound at auction!). Thus, many of our hay customers are now gone. For the first time in many years, we still have lots of hay to sell this winter.



Speaking of winter...it's been a mild, dry season so far. We still don't have enough snow for skiing, which I love to do every day here at the ranch. I do hope we get more snow soon!

Well, I must get back to work here. We hope you have a wonderful Christmas holiday and have an eventful 2012 with good health and happiness.

Much love and hugs to y'all,

Laura, Perry, Vicki, Midge and Ashley



What can be more satisfying than cutting your own hay crop? This is part of a field that we farmed last year. To put things into perspective, the rear wheels on Queenie are almost as tall as I am. Yes, that was a tall, thick crop!

