

Merry Christmas 2024!

I hope this newsletter has reached you while we are still celebrating the Christmas season. The postal strike continues, but there is some hope that it will end soon!

We have enjoyed a wonderful year – the best since Perry suffered his life-threatening illness back in 2020. Looking back, I feel that this was a “building” year, with several projects completed or nearly completed. Please grab a beverage, sit back and I’ll tell you all about it.

Last winter was incredibly mild and with very little snowfall. I think Perry ploughed our laneways twice all winter! Although snowshoeing was practically non-existent, the dogs and I enjoyed many long hikes out behind the ranch. I wore cowboy boots for most of the winter. I can't say I've ever done that before here in the Cariboo!

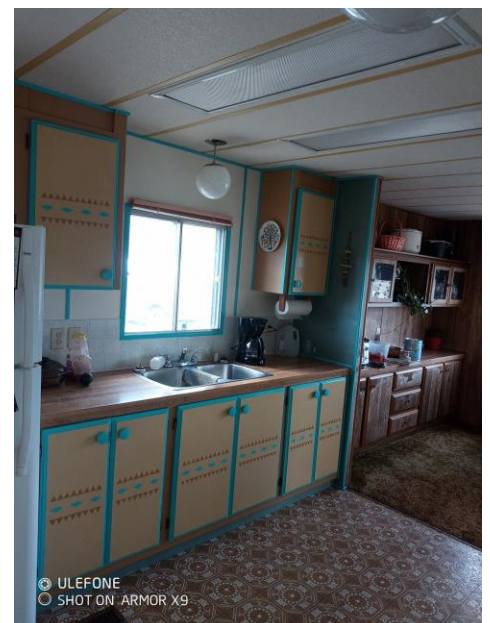


A warm, dry winter following by a very dry early spring could have spelled disaster for us as the wild fires started early again this year. Thankfully, all local fires were small and they were extinguished quickly. The mild weather also meant I was able to start riding earlier in the spring. I was extremely concerned of the severe drought conditions out on the cattle range. I took a few photographs and will include one here from early May. Thankfully, we started to get decent rainfall in May and June. It certainly reduced the risk of wildfires, but the drought continued. We had lovely green pastures, but the moisture in the ground only went down a few inches. Our local creeks and lakes were far below their normal levels.

We had a beautiful autumn and we continued to get decent rains. Our creeks started running again in November and it's feeling like we are finally recovering from this 3 year drought! The winter so far is similar to last year – mild and with just enough snow to cover the ground. However, at least the ground has moisture in it for next year!

As far as this being a building year, I spent most of my time working on projects at the ranch. May and June were very cold and rainy, so I decided to repaint the kitchen cupboards at the ranch. I decided to try something way out of my comfort zone and experimented with bright colours from paint I had in storage and made up my own Navajo patterns. I also installed a backsplash around the kitchen walls using old panels that Perry had used for a shower stall back in the 1980's. That man doesn't throw anything away, ha ha! Anyhow, it was a fun project and it turned out to be pretty decent, considering it didn't cost us anything more than the drywall adhesive and caulking for the backsplash. I'll include a photo here.

I also completed all of the outdoor work on the summer kitchen I started building last year. Our neighbours kindly supplied ginseng shade netting. It is extremely durable, so I used it as screening for the space under the roof overhang. It is also somewhat windproof, so I moved our BBQ into that space. How wonderful to not have to worry about wind, rain, snow – you name it – when planning to BBQ dinner! I also built a couple of planters out of pallet wood and stained them to match the kitchen exterior. And finally, I also managed to get the wood stove pipe and chimney installed, so I've been baking bread and cooking meals outside during mild weather, instead of “cooking us out of the house” by using the inside wood stove!





I was able to continue installing insulation and moisture barrier at our Green Lake house. What an ordeal! Working with curved walls was challenging, but I managed to finish everything except the master bedroom. That chore awaits this winter, when the days get a bit longer so I have enough daylight to work.

And now for the best news - Perry's health has really improved along with some more strength. He was able to finish building a corral system that includes a "crowding tub", a metal circular swing-door system that keeps the cattle moving without being able to turn back or jump over the top. It certainly made vaccinating and ear-tagging our calves so much easier and faster! He also fixed fences, repaired machinery, brought in firewood and now in winter, feeds the cattle. He certainly does lots for a man who will be turning 81 in January! He also walks the dogs every morning, which helps keep him mobile.

With Perry improving so much, I was able to fly out to Ontario in May for a visit with family. It was wonderful to actually celebrate both my brother Randy's and Greg's birthdays in person. I can't remember the last time I was able to do that. I so love being with family.

Speaking of dogs – our little furry family of three is doing well. Little skittish Miss Nell has made a complete turn-around. She is confident, sassy and is no longer fearful of people. She is also very smart and has started some basic cattle work. She is also extremely affectionate and loves to cuddle (as the first picture shows!). Guy continues to be an awesome and friendly dog that everyone locally knows and loves. Miss Vicky is now 17 years old and still remarkably active. She orders Perry around, barking at him to hurry up and get outside for their daily walk. It is hilarious to watch! We also now have 2 very affectionate barn kitties, Poncho and Lefty! The mouse population is noticeably lower this winter, ha ha!



I'm still enjoying riding my horse and get out whenever I can. I took some riding lessons in late winter to help me with my continuing back injury. My instructor was wonderful and helped me get back into a natural and comfortable position as I was unconsciously leaning forward – I guess to protect my back. I was actually making it worse, so I am grateful for the lessons that allowed me to stay in the saddle for longer periods of time.

Our cattle herd also thrived again this year with another 100% calf crop. We even had a set of twins that were born late (July). Sadly, one of the twins didn't survive as they were born during an extremely hot spell (37 C) and most likely died from dehydration before we could find it. Cattle really know how to hide their newborns! Once again, the calf auction prices were high, which helped pay for various expenses, including expensive repairs for our ranch truck (ouch!).

We also did well with our hay production despite the ongoing drought. The spring rains produced the best quality hay that I have ever put up on our hay lease! The horse and our cattle are looking great and should be healthy and fit through the winter.

Overall, our quality of life is excellent and we so enjoy this lifestyle. It certainly helps keep us fit, active and healthy. We are so grateful for all we have.

Wishing you have a wonderful, restful Christmas holiday and all the best in health and happiness for you in 2025.

Much love and hugs to y'all,
Laura, Perry, Vicky, Guy, Nell, Poncho, Lefty and Buddy the horse!