

RICHARD MARSHALL



THE HOMESTEADING HANDBOOK

A BACK TO BASICS GUIDE TO:

Finding The Perfect Homestead, Growing A Flourishing
Off-Grid Garden, Raising Healthy Livestock,
and so much more!



THE HOMESTEADING HANDBOOK

A Back to Basic Guide To:
Planning your Homestead the right way,
growing your food and raising livestock

By RICHARD MARSHALL

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HOMESTEADING INTRODUCTION

This was not part of my upbringing. I didn't grow up this way, in fact, no one in my family did.

Sure, I went hunting and fishing as a youth, it was the only thing to do. Microwaves were invented in my generation. Gone were the days of TV dinners, slow movement meals, there wasn't such a thing as farm-to-table, we wanted our food, and we wanted it at the push of a button. But at what cost? No-one stopped to think about the cost. We often think about going back in time, but would you go back and relive your past, or the life of a pioneer?

The stories of our ancestors have been lost as they have been passed along have passed away, and along with it any information that would have been useful in helping us with our future homesteading success. We never once thought that homesteading knowledge would ever be useful in our time. We were evolving as a human race and one day, meals would come from a pill, and robots would be our maids. We didn't see any need (or use) to learn how chickens laid eggs, how much land we needed to produce enough food for the winter, or how much firewood was required to keep us warm all season. No sir, we were moving on up with the latest technology and leaving all that antiquated, and simple living far in the past with the wagons and telegrams.

We were working every day in the city to come home to children that are all plugged in. Everything was convenient, fast, and instant. We

never talked anymore because Google knew everything we wanted to ask. Although the food didn't quite come out of a pill, it was close enough, if you can still call it food. Food now has more ingredients that I can't pronounce than it has recognizable food.

I then Woke Up!

We sat down as a family with our then two children, and decided to make some life-altering little by little, we converted our little beach home into a coastal homestead. Cooked our meals from scratch, recycled everything we could, made all of our own products from cleaners to toothpaste and even got a couple of dwarf goats, some laying hens, and honeybees.



The locals were impressed with all the changes we were making so often, that they asked to come by and take tours of our progress. They asked so many questions that we started offering workshops and even started a farmer's market with what we and other local farmers were able to grow. We were working on a self-sufficient life right there in the city.

We felt pretty accomplished since everything we were doing was a first-time experience with no one to ask for guidance. We had it all.

Until they didn't want us to...

Join me on my journey from city life to homestead, the mistakes and discoveries myself and my family have made along the way.

CHAPTER 1: **FINDING THE PERFECT HOMESTEAD**

“We are given the illusion of freedom. We are told if we work hard enough and long enough, we can buy our own land, and pursue happiness. We can work our land and enjoy it as long as it doesn’t infringe on the rights of others, doing the same on their land. But there’s a catch.”

Finding The Perfect Homestead:

Thousands of families all over the country are packing up their city roots and moving to the country in search of the perfect homestead. Does such a place exist? If so, where would one find it?



Unfortunately, many people do not have the luxury of just packing everything they own and move to the ‘perfect homestead’ location. Some families will be restricted to staying within reach, due to job or family, whatever the case may be, the following tips will help you in your search whether near or far.

In this chapter, we will go over qualities you should look for in the ‘perfect homestead’, as well as a checklist to

help you ask the right questions when looking for a place to settle down. From the long planting season to local county ordinances, you will be better equipped with the knowledge you need to find the place that's just right for you.

Succeeding Where Others Have Failed:

I'm willing to bet that very few or if any of you were raised on a homestead. I'm also willing to bet your parents and grandparents weren't homesteaders either.

The problem today is many who want to be homesteaders; that are feeling the call, or the pull to get back to the land don't have anyone they can call for advice. How many of you know anyone that lives off-grid, or anyone with experience to sit on the front porch with, to drink a cold glass of sweet tea and chew the fat about the farm, and homestead life. We have lost much of the knowledge that should have been passed down for generations.



Most would-be homesteaders experience the three D's when trying to homestead for the very first time. Deflated, Discouraged, Defeated. More times than not, after experiencing the three D's they give up their homesteading dream, head back to the city feeling like a failure, and never try homesteading again.

I won't promise, after reading this book that you'll never experience the three D's as a new homesteader, as a matter of fact, I can pretty much guarantee you will. However, not to the same degree as you would if you follow my advice, and probably not all, at the same time.

My goal is to give you the knowledge and tools you need to help you achieve homestead success.

Local Laws:

It's better to ask for permission now, than forgiveness later. Trust me on this! You wouldn't believe how many questions and messages I receive from people who bought land, or a home in an area where, unbeknownst to them, it was illegal to raise livestock. After a quick internet search, they



found that I too had the strong arm of the law take away my rights to raise food for my family. They are all looking to me for advice on how they can fight, and prevail, over the powers that be.

I will tell you the same thing I tell them, find out the laws first, BEFORE you: build a barn, buy livestock, plant a garden, or collect rainwater. You may be thinking "well that's absurd, no one can stop me from collecting water. That's not against the law". I wish I could tell you otherwise, I wish I could say you live in the land of the free, and if you work hard enough, pay your multitude of taxes, and buy your little slice of the pie you can be free to homestead on that land the way you see fit. I wish I could tell you all these things, but unfortunately, I can't.



Call the county building and zoning to ask them the pertinent questions that pertain to your homestead. Look at the local county tax maps. Ask for everything in writing and don't stop until you get answers. Make sure your potential homestead location isn't a part of an H.O.A. (homeowners association) that regulates and

restricts what you can and can't do on your land.

Other laws and or rules to inquire about when choosing a homestead location are:

- **Local cottage laws and farm store laws:**

Cottage food laws are basically the laws that allow small-time producers to use certain appliances in their homes to bake, cook, can, pickle, dry, or candy certain low-risk foods for sale.

- **Homeschool Laws:**

Detailed information on how to withdraw from public school, homeschooling requirements include testing & mandatory subjects, plus resources and more.

- **Farm meat sales and requirements:**

Look for regulatory and non-regulatory meat sales, as well as, herd sales. In addition to sales, inquire about processing on site. Certain areas have rules and regulations about discarding the entrails, etc.



- **Raw milk sales:**

Inquire about the legality of raw milk sales. Some states allow it, some for animal sales, others say you can sell it for crafts only, and some states forbid it altogether.

- **Water collection:**

Make sure water collection is allowed in your state, county, and city. Also, inquire about water and irrigation rights.

- **Livestock permission and livestock sales:**

Some areas may allow chickens but not roosters, or goats but no pigs, even if zoned for agriculture.

- **Outbuildings:**

Barns, chicken coops, goat managers, wood sheds, and

more, are all a functional and necessary part of a homestead. Make sure the building and zoning commission allows structures on your land outside of your dwelling.

- **Agriculture growth and sales:**

Growing food should be every man's right, whether it's inside your home or on every inch of land outside. Make sure you will be allowed to have a garden(s) on your land.



- **Fencing:**

They say good fences make great neighbors. Not only will it keep your livestock on your own land, but it will keep others out. Make sure you can install fencing on your land and what the requirements are.

- **Alternative energy:**

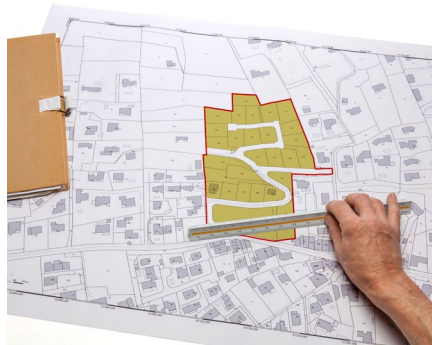
Although most homesteads are connected to public utilities, you may want to add alternative energy in the future. Contact the local power company, or zoning commission to see if your property is allowed to be off-grid, or grid-connected with alternative energy.

- **Timber:**

If you want to harvest the timber off your land, check to make sure it's legal to cut the trees. It is not uncommon for trees to be protected from harvest in residential areas.

Zoning:

Once you've inquired with the county, and city about the laws of your proposed homestead, check to see what zone it is in then look at all the laws associated with that zone. Also, check with the planning committee to



make sure your area isn't being considered for rezoning.

As an example, we bought the land that is zoned A1; agriculture. We are well within our right to have and operate a farm in our zone. Once we registered our farm with the State (I recommend doing this if you're planning on having livestock), by law, we had to place a sign by the road informing others we have a farm.

Because we are zoned properly, have a sign, and are registered with a State, anyone buying adjacent property cannot complain about the smell, noise, etc. of operations on our farm. Well, they technically could complain but the law would certainly be on my side, and they would be wasting their breath.

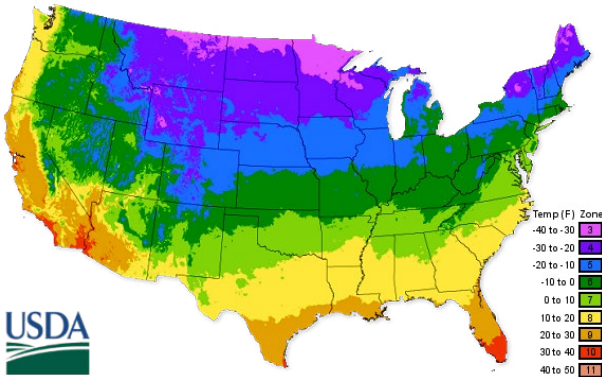
Planting Zone:

After you have established that you can legally grow a garden on your homestead, now you need to see if Mother Nature agrees. A planting zone is also referred to as a Hardiness Zone. A hardiness zone is a geographic area defined as having a certain range of annual minimum temperature, a factor relevant to the survival of many plants.



If one of your goals on your homestead is to grow and produce food, you'll need to know your planting zone or hardiness zone, so you know the length of your growing season, and the types of crops you can grow.

For instance, if you really want to grow citrus but your homestead is located in zone 5, you won't be able to grow citrus unless you grow them in a greenhouse with a controlled environment. Citrus grows better in zones 9-11.



Local Weather and Livestock:



In addition to knowing your hardiness zone for planting food, it is equally important to know the local temperatures and seasons, for the type of livestock you'll want to raise.

Some breeds are better suited for warm climates and vice versa. You won't want to pick southern Florida to homestead if your goal is to raise fiber animals, it's too hot and humid for them and their thick coats. Nor would you want to pick a homestead in northern Idaho, if you want to be a commercial beekeeper,

they would never survive the winters.

Knowing what your homestead goals are, and then matching them with a State, with the ideal climate for your goals, will help you in your success as a homesteader.

Can You Be A Homesteader?

This is one of those hard questions that we all really need to resonate on before making any life-altering decisions. We have to be able to separate desire and want from ability and reality. Although we may feel the urgency to do it all now, small steps in a forward direction is the key to success.

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT

After reading the information, do some research about your desired homestead and answer the following questions.

- *What is your physical ability?*

- *Do you have any medical issues that would hinder your ability to homestead?*

- *Do you have any homestead experience?*

- *Who will be joining you?*

- *What is their physical health?*

- Do they have any medical issues that would hinder their ability to homestead?

- What State are you wanting to move to?

Are there any state laws about

- Homeschooling
- Livestock Sales
- Milk Sales
- Plant Sales (selling plants you grow)
- Cottage Laws (selling products you make at home)
- Farm Stands
- Rainwater Collection
- Out Buildings

- City Laws about the same above?

- Is the land you're looking at zoned for agriculture?

- What is the planting zone?

- How long is the growing season?

- How much rain do they get on average?



Homesteading is a journey, not a race. Understanding your ability to physically and financially homestead, the legality of homesteading in your area, and the practicality of the act of homesteading will help you with your goals. Flexibility and adaptability are essential.

If you are bound to a specific location to homestead, then find out after your research you can't implement your plans, be adaptable to adjust those plans. After taking a personal physical assessment, you realize that owning 40 acres of farmland just isn't practical due to physical ability, scale it down to one or two acres. Heck, you can do a lot with even half an acre. Be flexible in your plans and adapt to the situation.



CHAPTER 2:

HOMESTEAD GOALS

“Moving never was part of the equation for us. I built that home and a business. All my family was there, my kids, now three of them were born and raised there, it was our home. But it no longer felt like home. I no longer felt like a free man, or that I really owned anything. We could only do what we were ‘allowed’ to do. Eat what we were allowed to eat. Raise what we were allowed to raise. It didn’t feel free at all. In fact, it felt like my walls were closing in on me as I lay in my bed at night.”

Then it hit me. A sudden urge to leave. Our home was no longer home. There had to be something more to life than what we had. We were alive but we weren’t truly living.”

Homestead Goals:

The best way to get you where you want to be is to have a plan, and then put that plan into action. In order to create a plan, you need to know what your goals are for the homestead.

Do you want to just live off the land? How will you make money? If you want to sell your harvest/homemade goods/livestock and so on, is there a local market for that?

Homestead Folder:

Any working farm or homestead requires keeping records, we will discuss this in further detail, in later chapters, but for now, you need to establish a homestead folder.

Include your research for land, copies of the local zoning laws, and numbers of contacts such as your city building inspector, the power company, and so on, in your homestead folder.

Next, create a section for your goals regarding your homestead. Check the list provided, and add more goals I may have omitted, or subtract the ones you don't want to be included in your homestead.



All Aboard:



Is everyone in your household all on board with the desire to homestead? How many people will be helping you? What are their physical abilities? What are their disabilities?

One of the hardest things to do is homestead when no one else wants to. If you are the only one who wants chickens, and the only one to take care of them, what happens when you're sick? Working? Out of town? This life is

tough, really tough!

Don't get me wrong, it's rewarding and fulfilling, but it's tough. Too damn tough to do on your own. You need a support team where everyone is on the same page, everyone has realistic expectations, and everyone has a project and responsibility they can be in charge of, or help with.

Have a family meeting and discuss the goals of each family member. Maybe one person has a passion to work with animals, and another loves to garden. Is there a doctor in the house? Someone needs to handle all of the emergencies that happen, whether they be two legs or four, medical intervention is a necessity. This life isn't for the faint of heart or a weak stomach.

Suggested Goals:

As I mentioned earlier, you may want to add to this list of goals or subtract from it, the main objective is you set goals the whole family is on board with.

Food:

What is your homestead goal for food? Do you want to grow enough just to supplement your grocery bill? Would you like to grow/raise as much of your own food as possible? Do you plan to grow enough to preserve for the pantry, and emergency preparedness? Would you like to grow enough for your family; enough to put some back for storage, and enough to give to friends and family? What about growing enough food to do all the above, and having enough leftovers to sell to help monetize, or barter for your homestead?



Livestock:

Livestock can provide a homestead with fertilizer for your garden, fiber for clothes and crafts, pelts for clothes, food for the family and pets, protection for wildlife or intruders, transportation, lawn maintenance, and an income from selling surplus. Not to mention they can be great companions.

Multi-purpose livestock to consider for your homestead are:

- **Chickens:** fertilizer, eggs, meat, insect and rodent control, protection, eggs for resale, baby chickens for resale, meat for resale, feathers for crafts, and tilling of the garden.
- **Goats:** fertilizer, milk, cheese, and other dairies, meat, fiber, landscaping and weed control, baby goats for resale, a hobby for farm shows, 4-H projects, companions.
- **Bees.** Pollinators for your garden, honey, bee pollen, bees for resale, honey for resale.
- **Rabbits:** Fertilizer, pelts for clothes, meat, pets, baby bunnies for resale, meat for pet food.

Homestead Business:

Let's talk about money. Contrary to popular belief, homesteading is expensive. It is a rewarding lifestyle, one that gives you a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction at the end of the day, but that satisfaction doesn't come cheaply.



How are you going to fund your homesteading dream? Do you plan to work off your homestead to fund your homestead? Or do you hope to monetize your homestead to support your family and your homestead?

After you've done your due diligence in Chapter One and learned all about the state, local, and neighborhood laws governing what you can, and cannot do in your homestead, you can use that knowledge to assist you in setting some homesteading goals to monetize your new adventures.



Pretending you can do everything you want, some ways you may be able to monetize your homestead are:

- Farmstand where you sell produce, jams, jellies, fresh eggs, and cut flowers.
- Farmers Market. Join a local farmers market to sell your wares.
- Farm Tours. Build a petting zoo, farm tours, etc. to local schools, groups, and the public.
- Farm to Table. Host farm-to-table events.
- Livestock. Sell livestock.
- Fibers. Raise fiber animals and sell their fleece to crafters, online, and specialty shops.
- Dairy. Sell milk, cheese, and dairy products.
- Workshops. Offer workshops teaching others about homesteading and the skills you offer. Such as rabbit processing, how to tan hides, canning and preserving food, how to make soap, bushcrafting, or gardening.
- B&B. Build a couple of campsites, or a small cabin, and offer a bed and breakfast. People pay good money to stay at a homestead.

Multi-Generational Homesteads:

Decades ago, the first homesteads were multi-generational and everyone on the homestead pulled their fair weight. The elders taught the younger generations and passed down their knowledge. The workday started before the sun came up, and ended after it went down.

Fast forward a half-century or so, and now you see single families with both parents working off the homestead, kids all busy with daily after school activities, and barely anyone spends any time at home. These are not ingredients for a conducive or successful homestead.



I say it's high time to bring back the multi-generational homestead. Instead of placing our elders in senior citizens' homes, bring them back and glean from their knowledge. Instead of rushing the kids out of the nest, and on their way to their own 30 yr mortgage, give them a slice of the homestead land and help them build their own house close to the family.

Do you plan on having other family members join your homestead? If so, do any of them have special skills or talents? Many hands make light work, and everyone can help pitch in for the common goal.



Aging:

One of the cruel, yet inevitable, side effects of life is aging. It will happen to us all, mostly while we least expect it. Our homesteading dream started when we were young and spry. In reality, we are aging and see the clock ticking as we try to tackle everything on our list, while



our bodies still allow us to. Build a homestead that can age with you.

For instance, try to build ramps with handrails instead of stairs. Make doorways wide enough for walkers and wheelchairs. Install raised garden beds that are easy to reach. Locate the woodshed close to the house so you don't have to haul wood a long way.

When designing your homestead and laying everything out, take into consideration how you'll accomplish each task as your body gets older.

Water:

Water should be a number one priority when looking for that perfect homestead. Water is essential for your homesteading success.

Does your homestead have a water source? Will you have a well? Connect to city water? Collect rainwater? (is this legal in your area?) How much rain does that area get per year? What are the water requirements of your livestock, garden, and home?



Do you plan on having a secondary source for water, should your main source fail?

What about filtration? What type of filtration system will you have in place?

All of these are thought-provoking questions that you should answer in your quest in planning a successful homestead.

Energy:

What do you plan on using for your energy? City? Solar? Wind? Hydro? A combination? Will you have a backup emergency plan like a generator?

Decide what source of energy will be best suited for your homestead by researching what's available in your area, and what will provide for your electrical needs and budget.

- Contact the local power company and ask if they can service your homestead first.
- How much will the installation cost?
- Recommended licensed electricians.
- What is the cost per kwh?
- Inquire if they offer alternative energy options.



Timeline:

After writing down and evaluating your homesteading goals, realistically evaluate a reasonable timeline for each project. Don't try to do too much at once, or everything all at once, or you will get overwhelmed and burn out.

Allow for flexibility because life does happen, and often. You may start the day out planning to chop firewood but then the pigs get out and your whole day is shot chasing hogs and fixing broken fences. Flexibility and a little laughter go a long way in maintaining some sort of sanity on the homestead.

CHAPTER 3:

PLANNING YOUR HOMESTEAD

“So we did it. We sold everything we owned, closed out our business, packed up the family, and moved to the mountains of Tennessee on 47 acres in the middle of nowhere.

We now live off-grid, homeschool our youngest, raise a plethora of livestock, and grow our own food. Although we may not ever be completely free from the government overlords, we feel as close as we’ll ever get.”

Planning Your Homestead:



Planning your homestead is one of the most exciting parts of the process. Incorporating all the ideas you’ve researched, and seeing your plans put into action is the ultimate joy.

Each phase of your homestead planning is as equally important as the next. You could have the best house, the best barn, or even the best neighbors, but if the laws prevent you from homesteading, you’re dead in the water.

Proper research suggested in Chapter One is as essential as the first step in planning your new homestead. Once you've made the plans, you can now let the fun begin.

The key to designing your homestead is flexibility and patience. Like anything to do with homesteading, things rarely go as planned. Being flexible and adaptable will serve you and your family greatly.

Location:

Once you've established the perfect State and Town, the next step is location. By answering the questions below, it will help you pinpoint the exact area you need, to start looking for available land.



- Do you need to be close to the schools?
- Does the bus route go down your road?
- How close do you need to be located to a doctor or VA office?
- Will you rely on city power or alternative energy?
 - If relying on city power, do they service the area you want to live in?
 - If they do service the area where you want to live, contact the energy provider and ask them how long their wait is for new construction. For instance, the county where I live isn't giving out any new building permits because our power grid is not large enough to handle growth in the area.
- Is there water access? If not, how will you supply water to your homestead?





- How close is the nearest fire department? Our area is prone to wildfires. We called 911 to report a wildfire in the mountains and it took them 45 minutes to get to us. A lot of damage can happen in 45 minutes.

Beyond The Location

You've found the PERFECT location for your homestead-congratulations!

Property Lines:

Depending on your area, one of the challenges you may face are; lack of pin coordinates on the survey that's registered at the county courthouse. I HIGHLY recommend investing in a good survey before signing that dotted line.

Our last survey was performed by a man that passed away in the 1980s who used landmarks such as the big oak tree on the corner that's no longer there. Or, 20 paces north from the rock with moss. For decades this land has been sold and passed on, with nothing more than a landmark where a tree may have been, as its property lines?

Keep in mind that after hiring a land surveyor, the neighbors who have used part of your land for many years to grow their prize-winning flowers, or raised their hogs, won't think too kindly of you asking for the land back, that would rightfully be yours. In

fact, situations like this can get downright ugly, and they are more common than one would think.





If you are faced with this problem you have a couple of choices:

1. You can hire an attorney to make the neighbors quit using your land (NOT RECOMMENDED)
2. You can offer to make a trade with the neighbors, you will deed them the portion of your land that they are using, and they will deed you the same equivalent of their land. A TRADE
3. You can walk (run) from the deal, this land is not for you.

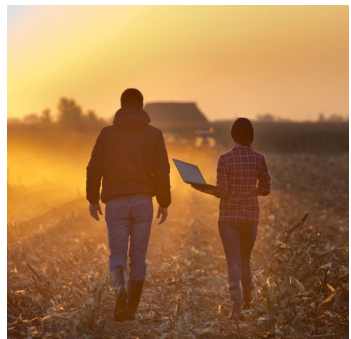
Once you've established your land markers, I highly recommend installing a fence to set boundaries. Our land was vacant for years before we purchased it. Trespassers didn't know it had been sold, and we've dealt with strangers on our land non-stop because we don't have clear and marked boundaries.

Easements and Landlocked:

Easement

A lot of these old country homesteads that are now for sale, were once part of a much bigger plot. Family farmland passed down from generations was split into parcels and given to family members or sold off, often in unusual dimensions.

For this reason, the easement was granted to landowners allowing them access to their land that was not accessible from the road.



When looking at land, inquire to see if there is an easement that allows others access to your land, or if the neighboring land has an easement that belongs to the property you want to buy.

Landlocked

Landlocked is a piece of land that has no easement designated to it, or attached to the deed. In this situation, you would need to ask adjoining landowners to give you easement rights on their property. This is not an easy task, and I would advise against buying any parcel that is landlocked.

Good Fences Make Great Neighbors:

While we're on the subject of neighbors, neighbors can make or break a homestead, literally. A bad neighbor, no matter how much land, can make your life a living hell. On the contrary, good neighbors can be a GODsend. Regardless if you have 300+ acres or a postage stamp, good neighbors are imperative.



In my experience, people don't like new people moving in on their turf. They worry about you being a good neighbor, just as much as you worry about them being a good neighbor. They like to keep to their own, and fear city slickers moving in and changing all the laws.

Another issue you may bump into is the neighbors using your land. Either the previous owner used to let them, so they assume those privileges are transferred with the deed, or they just took over using

it as their extended property because it was vacant. Either way, they might not think too kindly of giving up that freedom using land they didn't own.

The Right Spot:

Up until now, we've been like a mullet, all business in the front. But here comes the party in the back, picking the perfect spot on your land for your new homestead!!



Finding the perfect spot on your new land, and building a homestead, is definitely a permanent thing, so you want to take your time planning. Measure twice and cut once.

Some key points to consider when finding the perfect location are:

Flood Zone:

For obvious reasons, no one wants to build in a flood zone, unless of course, you are building an ark! To avoid problems in the future, check the local flood zone map, preferably before you buy, to ensure your dry land isn't in fact in a flood zone. What looks dry as a bone to you today, could be several inches underwater during the rainy season.



FEMA Flood Map Service Center:
Search By Address
<https://msc.fema.gov/portal/search>

Proximity to Water and Electric:

Homesteaders can survive without electricity a lot longer than we can without water. However, you will need both for a successful homestead.

Electric:

If you plan on connecting to public utilities, you'll need to locate your homestead in an area that can be accessed to public utilities. Keep in mind that the utility company charges for every light pole they install, and the further away you are, the more they will charge. The fees are hefty.

Water:

Not only will you want your home to be close to water access but also your barn or livestock areas. Hauling water is a daunting task and physically demanding. The ideal location of your homestead is one where water access is close by.



Accessibility:

We all love our privacy, peace, and quiet. However, we should still consider accessibility when deciding where to place our homestead. Although you may not want too many visitors, it is important your location can be reached. Access for deliveries, emergency vehicles, or the invited guest.

Terrain:

Our land is over 45 acres but much of it is steep and unbuildable.



Terrain will play a huge role in your homestead placement. Working off the side of the mountain is hard and presents several issues when building.

Look at your terrain and pay attention to the flow of water during the rains. Can you access the build site from all sides? What is the soil like? How far down can you dig? Will you be able to build on flat land, or will some of it be suspended?

Septic:

Depending on your County Building and Zoning laws, your County may require you to get a soil test and septic permit before you cut the first tree. This is an important first step when picking the perfect homestead build site. If you can't get approved for septic, you will need to pick a different build site or consider a composting system.



Property lines:

After your survey is complete and you know where your property lines are, contact the building and zoning for their setback guidelines, or if they have any registered easements for your land.

A setback is how far away from the property line you have to build.

While your land may not have any easements allowing neighbors to access it, you could have easements stated for emergency vehicle access or utility companies.

We have power lines down at the base of our land that goes up the side of our mountain to provide power to homes on the other side. We have to allow an easement access of 20 ft on either side of those power lines.

Orientation:

Would you like to see the rising sun from your bedroom window? Then you would want your bedroom window facing east. If you're adding solar panels to your roof, you'll want your roofline facing south.



Typically a south-facing home gets sun for most of the day, especially at the front of the house, and is, therefore, usually brighter and warmer. A north-facing home gets sun at the back of the house and is typically darker and naturally cooler than a south-facing one.

Elements to Include in Your Building Plans

If only I had a chance to build my homestead again, oh the things I would add. You know what they say about hindsight.

The items listed below are in addition to the typical rooms and features you would include in a house such as a bathroom, bedrooms, kitchen, living room, dining room, and garage.

Inside:

- Fireplace
- Cookstove
- Mudroom
- Food pantry

- Plenty of closets
- Big kitchen for processing food
- Plenty of windows for circulation and light
- Porch

Outside:

- Woodshed for firewood
- Storage shed
- Barn
- Chicken coop
- Other livestock areas
- Butcher area
- Pond
- Hay storage
- Water cistern
- Outdoor kitchen
- Firepit
- Outdoor shower
- Garden area
- Compost area
- Workshop
- Greenhouse
- Root cellar for food storage



Homesteads for the Aging

Although you may be a young whippersnapper now, you will want a homestead that ages with you.

Incorporating these features now will save you thousands in the future. Not to mention, you may have the ability to build them now, and may not be physically capable in the future.

- **One story.** Stairs are hard to climb when you get older. If you, or a member of your family, becomes bound to a walker or wheelchair, stairs would not be possible.
- **Ramps.** Install ramp access to all buildings. Not only are ramps necessary for aging, but they also come in handy

when you're carrying a heavy load or wheelbarrow.



- **Wide Doors.** Doorways need to be at least 34" wide for exterior doors and 32" wide for interior doors, for wheelchair access. We like 36" wide doors to allow room for maneuvering.

- **Walk-in Shower.** A walk-in shower with a shower bar are a great addition to any bathroom.

- **Main Level Bathroom.** If you do build a two-story house, make sure to include a bathroom with shower access on the main level.

- **Raised Garden Beds.** You can grow a lot of food in raised beds. Place them close to the house for easy access.

- **Light and Wall Receptacles.** Install light switches and receptacles at heights that can be accessed by those in a wheelchair, no higher than 48" off the floor.

It All Comes Together.

Now that you have worked your way through the legalities of planning a homestead, and building a homestead, you can put your plan into action. Map your property and work with your design to make the best homestead for you and your family.

Look at the above suggestion and note which elements you would like to include in your plan, which ones you would like to omit, and what ideas you may have that I didn't include?

CHAPTER 4:

GROWING AND SUSTAINING A GARDEN

“Although food didn’t quite come out of a pill, it was close enough, if you can still call it food. Food now has more ingredients that I can’t pronounce than it has recognizable food.

Here’s the secret, real food doesn’t have ingredients.”

Growing Food.

Growing your own food is one of the most empowering things you can do. To watch something grow, harvest it, and make a meal to feed yourself and your family, there is a lot of pride in accomplishing this. Satisfaction knowing that as long as you have seeds and soil, you’ll never starve- food security.



Every homestead has some form of food production, whether produce or livestock. In this chapter, we’ll walk you through the steps to help you work towards your very own food security.

Location:

I have some funny stories to share about all of the many, many, mistakes I've learned from, in my gardening years, regarding location, or lack thereof.

One year I planted my entire garden below, a then, bare hickory tree. As the leaves filled in, they dripped sap on my plants, burning holes in all the leaves and poisoning them.

In addition to poisoning my beautiful garden, the garden was in complete shade by the time all the trees filled in.



Then I planted an amazing garden right next to the chicken coop. Our fine feathered poop producers destroyed my entire garden in less than 30 minutes.

Another time, we planted a garden in sandy soil that couldn't hold any water, and everything shriveled up and died.

And my latest garden flop was when we planted my birthday garden, with all the plants my kids gifted me, right next to the new puppy's spot. Once we left the house, the puppy tore up our garden. You! Yeah, I didn't harvest anything that year either.

So you see, we all make mistakes and will continue to do so until the day we leave this earth. However, there is a lot to be said for learning from another's past.

Another helpful tip for your location is placing the garden in your path. If your garden is located along your daily path, you are more prone to paying attention to it. You



will notice if it needs water, if the tomatoes are ripe, or if you've had an unwelcome visitor - such as a deer that ate all your sunflowers.

Garden Placement:

Before you grab that shovel or cultivate that first row, there are some steps you need to take.

First, observe.

We, as humans, are too quick to act and too slow to observe. Watch the sun throughout the day; where does the light hit and when? What time of the year is it? As some time passes, note how the sun changes, throughout the seasons.



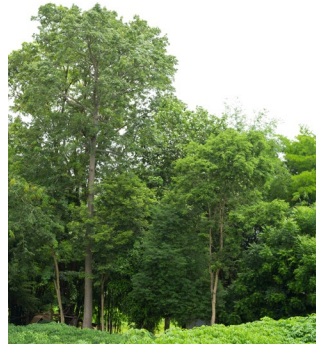
Sun:

Most garden plants require 6-8 hours of sunlight. Locate the area that receives 6-8 hours of sunlight, without being in direct sunlight all day. Find the partly shady places on your land, as well, for the plants that require more shade.

Trees:

Another lesson to learn from my mistakes is to observe the trees. Are they fully grown? Do they cast a shadow on your garden area? Will the roots be an issue if you plan on tilling the ground?

Producing chemicals that inhibit the growth of nearby plants is called allelopathy. In the case of walnut and



hickory trees, an allelopathic chemical called juglone causes wilting of some of your favorite homegrown veggies, including tomatoes.

Water:

Once you've located the perfect spot for sunlight, how close is your location to a water source? How do you plan on watering your garden?

Once you do decide on a water source, it's important to have your water tested. We installed a well just for our gardens, however, everything died that year including

our new sod. We later found out that our well wasn't deep enough to tap into the freshwater, it was full of saltwater (we lived by the beach). Saltwater and green things don't mix.



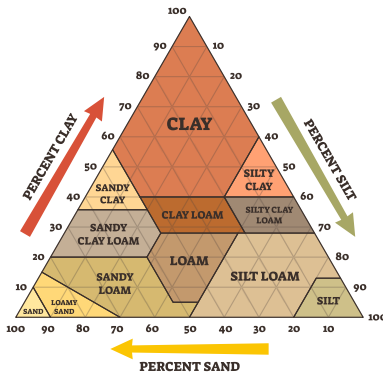
Contaminated water can cause ornamentals to discolor, become stunted, grow irregularly or even die. So water quality in gardens may be important whether it's an edible garden or just ornamental.

Your local extension agency can offer water testing for you at a minimal cost. The results will tell you if you need any treatment or a filter system for your gardens.

Soil:

Unless you plan to grow food using aquaponics or hydroponics, it's impossible to grow food without the proper soil. Fortunately, if you have poor soil, you can fix it by amending it. The first step is to see what type of soil you have.

Types of soil.



There are three main different types of soil, Sandy, Clay, and Silt.

1. **Sandy** soil is light and dry soil. Tends to be more acidic and low in nutrients. It doesn't hold moisture well.
2. **Clay** soil is high in nutrients but also heavy, compact, and doesn't drain well.
3. **Silt** soil is a light and moisture-retentive soil type with a high fertility rating.

Soil PH:

Growing food successfully goes beyond putting something in dirt and watering it. The pH of your soil will determine what plants will grow and be productive. The pH in the soil can be acidic or alkaline; 0.0 is acidic and 14.0 is alkaline.

Most plants require a soil range of pH of 5.5-6.5, so if your soil tests for ranges outside of those readings, you will need to amend it.



Soil Test:

Soil tests are available that you can purchase from a garden store and perform yourself. However, most local extension agencies offer extensive soil tests with a readout of what amendments your soil needs. In addition to the test, they have knowledgeable staff that

can offer advice or helps you troubleshoot any issues you may have.

Composting:



Composting is a mixture of ingredients used to fertilize and improve the soil. It is commonly prepared by decomposing plant and food waste, and recycling organic materials. The resulting mixture is rich in plant nutrients and beneficial organisms, such as worms and fungal mycelium.

You can make your own compost by setting up a composting system, or area on your homestead. We build our current system out of wood pallets and have a four bin system which we rotate. We have also used plastic tumblers in the past that work just as well. (how big are these tumblers?)

It is key to have a balance of green and brown organic matter in your compost system. Green matter consists of things like grass clippings, produce scraps, dead plants, and so on. Brown matter consists of things such as leaves, sawdust, hay,

Other things that can be added to your compost are ash from the fireplace, coffee grounds, pasta, and manure from your livestock.

How to Compost.

Once you have a designated area for composting and a nice balance of green and brown matter, you will want to spray it lightly with water just to get it moist, but not soaking wet.

Next, use a shovel or pitchfork to stir the compost weekly to introduce air into it.

As the compost breaks down, beneficial microbes and insects will turn your leftovers and scraps into beautiful, rich compost for your lawn and garden. You can use your compost to help amend your soil or topdress gardens.



This process causes the compost pile to heat up, and too much heat will kill the beneficial microbes. Stirring the compost pile helps prevent it from overheating.

Garden Tools:

An artist is only “as good as his brush” which can be applied to gardening as well. Proper tools can go a long way in making a gardener’s job easier.

If you’re just starting out gardening, some of the tools you’ll need are

- Garden gloves
- Rake
- Wheelbarrow
- Shovel, both hand shovel and standard size
- Garden hose and sprayer nozzle
- Sprinklers
- Pruning shears
- Loppers
- Hand Trowel
- Garden fork
- Hoe
- Spade
- Watering can
- Planting pots



In addition to the tools, you’ll need a dry safe place to store them such as a barn, garage, or storage shed.

Planning Your Garden:

Aside from the traditional row gardening that we are more familiar with, there are several ways to grow food.

Personally, we try to use as many different methods as possible to increase our food production. For example, we have traditional row gardens, terrace gardens, tower gardens, planter pots, greenhouses, indoor gardening, and hydroponics.



Some of the different gardening methods include (but not limited to):

Raised Beds:

Raised garden beds are a contained area in which you add soil. They can be made out of pretty much anything from tires, to timber, to roofing tin, and more. Raised beds are ideal for those with limited space or mobility. Raised beds allow you to control the soil because you add it yourself.



Vertical Gardening:

Vertical gardening is growing plants vertically instead of horizontally. It extends your growing capability by growing plants in otherwise unused space. We add cattle panels to our garden boxes creating a tunnel to walk through, which we grow food on.

Vertical gardening is the perfect solution for

vining plants such as grapes, kiwi, cucumbers, sweet potatoes, and so much more.



Hydroponics:

Hydroponic gardens are a soilless gardening system. The systems circulate air and water around the root system on the plants. You add the nutrients to the water so the plants have the proper nutrition.

Aquaponics:

Aquaponics combines hydroponics and a fish tank. The fish fertilize the water, the water circulates around the plant roots and you harvest the plants. In addition to vegetables, you can also harvest the fish for an additional protein source.



Planter Pots:

One of the easiest, and quickest, ways to garden is in planter pots. The perfect solution if you are nipping at the bit to grow something now, but not ready to plant your main garden. Anything that can contain soil and has drain holes, can become a planter pot.

We have used tires, coffee cans, old boots, sand pail, and even a feed sack. Get as creative or as whimsical as you like.

Indoor Gardening:

If you have a sunroom in your new homestead or a sunny window, this is the perfect place to garden indoors. Another option to growing food indoors is by growing microgreens, no window is needed. Just some grow lights and a shelf.



Living Roofs:

I personally love the idea of living roofs. They are literally a garden on your roof. Some pre-planning and design is needed to take place during the construction process of your homestead, or outbuilding such as a rubber membrane to prevent leaking, and safe access to your roof to

name a few. However, living roofs provide extra insulation and wise use of the unused real estate.

What to Plant.

What you'll plant, and when, will largely depend on your planting zone. There are cool weather crops and warm weather crops.

Examples of cool weather crops include lettuce, broccoli, winter squash, collards, kale, cabbage, and other greens. Warm weather crops include things like watermelon, cucumbers, zucchini, tomatoes, and beans.

Continuous Food.

In order to keep your garden in a continuous supply of food, you'll need to do succession planting. Succession planting is planting things either right after you harvest something from that spot, or plant something a week or so after you've done the first planting.

For example, say you plant corn which takes a long time to mature,

you can use the space in between to plant a smaller crop like radishes, bush beans, or carrots.

Another example of succession planting is by planting beans in between your lettuce as your lettuce is getting ready for harvest.



A couple of tips to keep in mind when deciding what to plant are:

1. Only plant what you and your family will eat, unless you're planning on selling your produce.
2. Only plant what will grow in your hardiness zone. Don't try to grow crops that are not designed for your climate. Plants and seeds list their hardiness zones on their package or label.
3. Protect your gardens. Livestock, wildlife, and trespassing humans, all love gardens as much as we do. Protect your investment by placing fences around your gardens.

Trees and Shrubs

One regret I have that I failed to do when we first moved to our homestead, is to plant fruit and nut trees, and fruit shrubs that first year.



Trees take a long time to develop in order to harvest their fruits, as well as the fruit bushes. You're looking at a minimum of three years before you yield any type of harvest, depending on the age of the tree, or shrub you bought.

If you have the opportunity, I would strongly consider investing in some

fruit and trees and fruit bushes the first year on your homestead. Of course, research what types will grow best in your area.

Fruit Trees

- Apple
- Pear
- Mulberry
- Peach
- Persimmon
- Plum
- Nectarine
- Lemon
- Orange
- Grapefruit
- Fig
- Cherry
- Loquat



Nut Trees

- Walnut
- Almonds
- Hazelnut
- Pistachio
- Brazil Nuts



Fruit Shrubs

- Blueberries
- Blackberries
- Huckleberries
- Currants
- Gooseberries
- Elderberry
- Goji Berry



Plant Diversity

A well-balanced system needs diversity. Many years ago we had all of these lush green plants, beautiful fruiting flowers, but no fruit? None. Later I discovered we were lacking pollinators, and pollinators are essential to any garden.

The following season I planted some herbs and flowers that were known to attract pollinators and walla! Fruiting plants again!

In addition to planting herbs and flowers to attract insects, we also invested in a couple of beehives, and that was the beginning of our beekeeping adventures (more on that later).



We became beekeepers not because we wanted honey, we became beekeepers because we wanted a successful garden. Honey is just a happy byproduct.

When planning and designing your garden, make sure to incorporate some herbs and flowers to attract pollinators and other beneficial insects.

Herbs for Pollinators (example)

- Anise Hyssop
- Borage
- Bee Balm
- Lavender
- Fennel
- Rosemary
- Chives
- Thyme
- Basil
- Catnip
- Yarrow
- Echinacea





Flowers for Pollinators and Beneficial Insects

- Nasturtiums
- Sunflowers
- Butterfly Bushes
- Calendula
- Cosmos
- Salvia
- Milkweed
- Zinnia

Gardening is therapy with benefits; time outside in the fresh air and sun, aesthetically pleasing, AND you get food!!! Growing your own food means your family won't go without no matter what this crazy world throws at you. Peace of mind and a sense of food security.

CHAPTER 5: LIVESTOCK

“Cooked our meals from scratch, recycled everything we could, made all of our own products from cleaners to toothpaste, and even got a couple of dwarf goats, some laying hens, and honeybees.”

Raising Livestock:

Adding livestock to your homestead feels like the moment when you’ve finally arrived! You have your home, gardens, and barn, all you are missing is livestock.

To be able to provide for the needs of your family, and to ensure the quality of life of the animal from beginning to end. Connecting with your food source, learning you don’t need roosters to have eggs, and the sacrifice of what it takes to really put food on the table. This is what homesteading is all about. It’s the grit and backbone of the homesteading movement.



Getting Started With Livestock.

They say chickens are the gateway livestock. Meaning once you get chickens, you just keep going. Then you want goats, and next pigs, then ducks, turkeys, and the madness just keeps growing.



I believe chickens are considered the gateway livestock because they are relatively easy to raise. Chickens provide you and your family with fresh eggs daily, and can easily become an income source by selling the extra eggs. They require little space and are full of personality that provide endless entertainment.

Our livestock journey actually started with goats, then bees, and later we added chickens. After chickens, we added pigs, turkeys, guineas, rabbits, and the list goes on. It truly is addicting, mark my words.

Livestock Laws.

We covered this topic in general for all homesteading-related laws. However, sometimes there are more specific laws related to livestock.

For instance, when we were looking for land, we found five acres in the country in an unrestricted area, meaning they didn't have building codes. However, the owner of the land had subdivided a bigger plot and attached bylaws to them. You were allowed horses on the land but no other livestock.



In the county we lived in back in South Carolina, they made ALL roosters illegal in the entire county. Chickens were allowed in some spot zoning areas, but roosters were completely forbidden.



Before you buy that first baby chick or tiny bee, make sure to check with:

- State Laws
- County Laws
- City Laws
- HOA Laws
- And any restrictions associated with your deed

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Better to check the law now, and know you'll be in compliance than to spend thousands on infrastructure and have to get rid of everything.

Against The Law.

If specific livestock is prohibited where you live, all is not lost, there are steps you can take that may make it legal again.

Depending on where you live, it is possible to get a ruling, or a law changed to make livestock ownership legal again, you just need to get involved.

Time For A Change:

In order to get a law changed, you have to know the legal process required in order for you to achieve that goal.

1. Who is responsible for the law? What government branch is in charge of the law you want to change?

2. Read the laws governing your issue, make sure you have a full understanding of them.
3. Talk to the group of people that made the change, if they're still around.
4. Towns and cities have different governing structures, so if you're working on changing a local law, figure out how yours works. Most have a mayor, and some kind of city council; some also have other positions within the city government, including city managers and commissioners. Some states allow you to file local or state referendums as a citizen, but many states do not. If you are in a state that does not, you need to get the city council or mayor to support your idea and bring it to a vote.



5. Go to community meetings if you can't file a referendum. This is a way for you to bring up your issue to local lawmakers. Check your city to see when the meetings are scheduled for constituents to bring up issues. You usually have a limited time to speak, so be prepared and be professional. And practice keeping your speech within the time limits.
6. Changing a law can take a long time, and due process takes a while. Persevere and be diligent.

Is it an H.O.A. restriction? Consider getting on the board and asking the board members to change it. Make sure to follow the proper rules of order and notify all the homeowners of any possible votes or changes.

Connect with like-minded people and get local support in your pursuit. Go to the local farm store and farm vets to make your connections. There is power in numbers.

Allergies:

Allergies to animals are no joke; from watery eyes to more severe reactions that cause anaphylactic shock, and even death. Not only do you need to be concerned about allergies in your family but also anyone that may visit.

We are beekeepers, both my spouse and I are allergic to bee stings. We keep epi-pens on hand at all times. We have a sign at the beginning of our property stating we have farm animals, and bees so visitors will be informed.



Before adding livestock to your homestead, you may want to (although not mandatory) get allergy tested, especially if you're prone to allergies.

Recently, I was experiencing swollen eyes beyond normal hay fever. After extensive allergy testing, the results showed I'm allergic to horses (among a plethora of other things). One of the livestock breeds we were planning to add to our farm. Thankfully, I found out before spending thousands on the infrastructure, and a horse.

A nice stocked medicine cabinet is always a good idea whether you suffer from allergies or not. Consider adding things like allergy meds, Benadryl, antihistamines, and itch relief cream to your human first aid kit.

Pets VS Livestock:

We have two pets on our land, two. Everything else serves a greater purpose for the homestead. Whether that's providing food for my family, an income, working on the land or a combination. Our livestock is an investment of our time and resources. We don't have the luxury or the inclination to have a pet production plant. The long-



term goal is to have a functional, self-sufficient, and sustainable homestead.

With that in mind, there are often hard decisions that must be made along the way for the greater good of the homestead.

Decisions like knowing when a specific breed is no longer cost-efficient, and it's time to get rid of them.

When livestock is not:

1. Feeding the family
2. Making money
3. Working the land

Then it's time to get rid of them because they are becoming a financial and physical burden.

Other situations when you should consider getting rid of livestock are:

- When specific livestock becomes too physically demanding.
- If they become aggressive.
- If they are cost-prohibitive. If livestock costs more to raise than the return you get from it.
- If they don't stay contained, escaping all the time causing issues with neighbors.
- If specific livestock is just burdensome, it's best for you to find a new home for them.

As a homesteader, we owe it to our animals to always have their best interest at heart. To practice good animal husbandry. Good animal husbandry also means making hard decisions such as rehoming them or culling when needed.

Farm Vet and First Aid:

Sooner or later, if you have livestock, you'll need a farm veterinarian. One that is trained, and skilled in taking care of your specific breeds of animal. Best to find one locally, before you need one and develop a relationship.



When we were living by the beach, there wasn't a vet for two hours, in any direction, that took care of goats. House calls were not only extremely expensive but also hard because of the distance and availability. Generally, when a goat is sick and going down, they go down fast. Having a local farm vet is imperative.

Farm vets worth their weight in gold usually have a waiting list for new customers. Best to get on that list before you need them. If you can't find a farm vet locally, ask your local Extension Agency, or farm supply store for a referral.

Livestock First Aid Kit:

Every homesteader will also serve as a farm vet at some point. It's best to be stocked and ready for emergencies.



Each breed of animal has specific ailments and injuries that are unique to them. Make sure to study the breed of livestock that you have, and what injury or sickness they are prone to, in order to customize your first aid kit.

- Clippers for hooves, horns, and or spurs
- Disposable latex gloves
- Disposable razor
- Duct tape
- Dusting powder (for biting and chewing insects on poultry,

hogs, sheep, cattle, horses)

- Epsom salt
- Electrolytes
- Eye Wash
- First-aid guide
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Frothy bloat treatment (for bloat and constipation in ruminants)
- Gauze dressing pads
- Hoof dressing (for thrush/footrot)
- Isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol
- Lubricant for the thermometer (i.e., petroleum jelly)
- Milk Replacer and Bottles for babies
- Molasses
- Needle-Nose Pliers
- Nonsteroidal eye ointment
- Nutri-Drench
- Oral syringe (for dosing medications by mouth)
- Paper Towels
- Pocket knife
- Probiotics
- Rectal thermometer
- Roll gauze
- Safety scissors (for cutting dressings)
- Scissors
- Self-stick elastic bandages, such as Vetrap
- Sterile saline solution (for rinsing wounds and removing debris from eyes)
- Stethoscope
- Syringe (without the needle, for flushing wounds)
- Tweezers
- Udder ointment (Check label for use in dairy animals.)
- Vet Tape
- Wire cutters
- Wound ointment/spray (Check the label if you plan to use the product for meat and dairy animals.) such as VetRex or BluKote



In addition to the above list, I like to have a selection of antibiotics and medicines on hand for the livestock we have. We live in a remote location far from any city, or veterinarian, and keeping what we need on hand has saved our animal's lives in the past.

Adding Livestock:

Now the fun part comes in, adding livestock to your homestead, and thus helping you achieve self-sufficiency.

If you listen to any of my advice, listen to this, take your time. Start with one species, one breed, have it on your land for a while, and learn how to take care of it before you add another.

As new homesteaders, we all want to do it now. We feel the urgency pressing on us, almost to the point of panic, to do as much as we can now before it's too late. Too much, too soon, will not only be bad for you and your livestock in the long run, but it will cause you to get burned out, and possibly even cause you to throw in the towel.



Pick one species. Study it, prepare for it by building a proper shelter, gather the supplies for your first aid kit, purchase the needed food, and bedding, find a farm vet, purchase the animal, then let the fun, and work, begin. Once you've had the species for a while and you feel like you've become pretty proficient at caring for it, then it's time to consider adding more if desired.



Honey Bees:

I've been a beekeeper for a little over a decade now, and I can honestly say, I never want to be without a couple of beehives on my land. With the exception of monthly inspections, they are pretty much hands-off livestock. They require very little human intervention or routine daily care.

There are three main types of honeybees that most beekeepers raise in the United States. **Russian, Carniolan, and the Italian Honey Bees.**

The Russian Honey Bee is good for colder climates, disease-resistant, and is a good honey producer. They are prone to swarming and are a little more aggressive than other breeds.

Carniolan Honey Bees are very docile, like a warmer climate, and good honey producers. They don't tend to like the cold and are more susceptible to disease.

Italian Honey Bees are a favorite among many beekeeper associations, largely in part to their great honey production. Like the Carniolan, they are more docile but are also susceptible to disease.



Beekeeping Supplies:

The initial investment of beekeeping is not cheap. However, after you make that initial investment and are all set up, you rarely have to reinvest. Unlike other livestock where you have recurring costs.

- Bees 3lbs pack of bees
\$75.00- \$150.00 or a Nuc \$150.00-\$350.00
- Hive: Langstroth \$100 - \$300.00
- Bee Suit \$125.00
- Gloves \$30.00
- Hive tool \$10.00
- Hive Brush \$8.00
- Smoker \$45.00

Space:

A Langstroth is roughly 16" X 22" and you'll need at least five feet of clearance all around the perimeter. You want to place the hive out of any walking path and away from neighbors, pools, or swing sets.



Chickens:

The gateway livestock of many homesteaders. Listen, chicken math is a real thing. First, you say just three chickens! Then the next thing you know is there is a sale on the baby chicks at the feed store, and 50 it is!

Chickens are a widely accepted backyard livestock in many urban areas, and they are gaining in popularity as people want to learn to become more self-sufficient.

Chickens are multi-purpose livestock. You can raise them for manure, eggs and/or meat, and generate an income by selling surplus.



Best Breeds for Eggs

While all chickens lay eggs, some are better at performing than others. My three top choices are popular breeds that can be found easily and lay an average of 200-300 + eggs per year.

1. Buff Orpington
2. Leghorn
3. Sexlink



Best Breeds for Meat

Meat breeds will grow quicker than egg breeds and have a better meat-to-bone ratio. In some cases, like with the Cornish Cross, you can harvest them in as little as 6-7 weeks for a decent size bird for the freezer.

1. Cornish Cross
2. Red Rangers
3. Color Yield Broiler



Best Dual-Purpose Breeds

Your dual-purpose breeds are good for both egg and meat production. They will be slower growing than your meat breeds but will still produce a decent size bird for harvest, as well as provide a sufficient amount of eggs.

1. Road Island Reds
2. Black Australorp
3. The Speckled Sussex

Chicken Supplies

- Baby chicks \$.50 - \$5.00 each
- Chicken Coop \$100-\$500 +
- Wire for run and/or fenced in yard plus t-posts \$150 - \$250.00
- Chicken feeder \$25.00
- Chicken waterer \$20.00
- Bedding for floor \$7.00 a bag
- Chicken feed \$25.00 50 lb bag

Many items would be a one-time investment like the coop and fencing, while others like the feed and bedding would be a recurring cost.

Goats:

Goats have exploded in popularity in the last decade, especially the smaller breeds. Their short stature allows backyard homesteads to have dairy livestock, which otherwise wouldn't be feasible due to limited space. Goats are raised for manure, dairy, meat, and fiber. They are also a good market for resale and monetizing your homestead.



Dairy Goat Breeds

Technically, all goat breeds can produce milk. However, if you're specifically wanting milk, some breeds excel above the rest.

1. Saanen 2,765 lbs of milk per year
2. Alpine 2,620 lbs of milk per year
3. Sable 2,570 lbs of milk per year



Meat Goat Breeds

1. Boer 230-340 lbs
2. Kiko 150-300 lbs
3. Savanna 125-250 lbs

Fiber Goat Breeds

1. Angora
2. Cashmere
3. Pashmina

Goat Supplies

- Goats \$50.00 - \$1,200 + each
- Manger or housing \$500.00 +
- Fence and t-post \$250.00 - \$1000.00 +
- Feeder \$35.00
- Water Bucket \$20.00
- Hay \$12.00 per bale
- Feed \$19.00 per 50lb bag

The initial startup cost largely depends on the breed you buy, how many you buy, how large an area you fence in, and your location. Goats are herd animals and require another goat companion. You will need to buy a minimum of two, no matter the breed.



Other Livestock.

In addition to the three livestock I mentioned above, some other choices you may want to add are

- Quail
- Guineas
- Turkeys
- Ducks
- Geese
- Llamas
- Alpacas
- Pigs
- Rabbits
- Donkeys/Mules
- Horses
- Sheep
- Cows
- Buffalo
- Fish



A Well Balanced Homestead:

When deciding on livestock, consider the needs of your homestead. Think in terms of dual-purpose and multifunctional as well. Livestock can benefit you, and your family in more than one way.

For instance, goats, you can use their manure in the garden, harvest the milk for drinking, and cheese, process the meat and use the fiber for textiles.

In addition to supplying the needs for your own family, you can generate an income by selling the babies or renting out your goats for brush cleaning. If milk sales are allowed in your state, you can sell the milk for animal/human consumption, or for making goat milk soap.

Assess your land and your needs, figure out what livestock would work best, and start with one species at a time. Don't forget to reevaluate your homestead at least once a season, to confirm it is still cost-effective, and not a financial or physical burden. Sometimes we get so wrapped up in the day-to-day chores, we don't stop to question if it makes sense to continue.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Homesteading is a way of life for many, but for some of us, it has only been a dream. It's time to put action behind that dream and make it a reality, even if you only take one tiny step at a time.

My goal with this book is to help you lay out your action plan towards a self-sufficient life of homesteading, from finding the perfect location to picking what livestock to add. To help you turn your dream into a viable reality.

Prepping is essential for your initial survival in any emergency. However, homesteading takes you beyond that survival period. Homesteading ensures you will thrive for years beyond your preps.

Homesteading removes the control from the powers that be, and places you in control of your own quality of life. From the quality of the food you eat, to the ability to keep your house warm in the winter. When you homestead, you are in control. That's a freedom that no man can take away. It's a lifestyle worth pursuing, and a lifestyle worth preserving.





The wonderful thing about homesteaders is, they are not selfish. They know the value and meaning of community. They also know they can't do it all by themselves, so they rely on their fellow homesteaders. They want to share their knowledge with anyone that wants to learn. By doing so, they know their skills and knowledge won't die with them, but will be passed on for generations.

Plan your homestead, make your mistakes, learn new skills, get your hands dirty, and share with others. That's the heart of the homesteader.