

Hello egg lovers!

Greetings from Pie Ranch. As we go into the last two months of our season with the Blue House Organic CSA, it seems like a good time to send out news from the flock.

It has been a good (if cool) summer here at the ranch, and with autumn coming on, there is a palpable shift in the rhythms of our days. This is particularly true for our hens. A chicken's laying is directly related to the number of daylight hours, being most productive in the summer when the days are long and the sun shines for more than 14 hours. As the days shorten (as they are now) the birds' productivity decreases. For farms like ours that have folks like you expecting eggs each week, estimating the number of eggs our ladies will lay into the shorter, cooler days of fall can be challenging. We set the maximum number of subscriptions we could sell through Blue House's CSA according to those estimates.

...Of course, that was before the bobcats.

This year, two bobcats were born at Pie Ranch, and through the spring we watched them periodically running playfully across the road or ducking into trees along the wilder borders of the farm. Slightly larger than a housecat, we regarded them as one more sign of the healthy ecosystem we have tried to encourage here and wished them well ...until they discovered the all-you-can-eat chicken buffet we, apparently, had laid out for them. Mid-summer, we lost nearly 20 birds over a three week period. We have since improved our fencing and now keep careful schedules of opening/closing coops to keep the birds safe during sunrise and sundown – key hunting times for the bobcats. We managed to stop the killings, but the loss has been painful emotionally and financially.

Thankfully, at Pie Ranch there is life after death. A season of unexpected loss is winding down and we are already looking to next season with the arrival of 175 baby chicks that will replace our “elder” ladies and bring a flush of vigor and renewal to our laying community. As with our existing birds, these chickens are many different breeds with every hue of brown, white, and green promised in their egg futures. See the photo below of these adorable young girls – layers in training, full of life and promise.

As we contemplate the next couple months, we're hopeful that our remaining hens can still keep up with the demand of our egg subscriptions despite predators and their own natural down-cycling in the shorter days of fall. We count on all of you to be understanding as we look after our flocks the best we can and appreciate all of your support as part of this community of animals, plants and people. We invite your thoughts, comments, and questions at [info@pieranch.org](mailto:info@pieranch.org).

All the best to you and your families.  
The Pie Ranch Team

