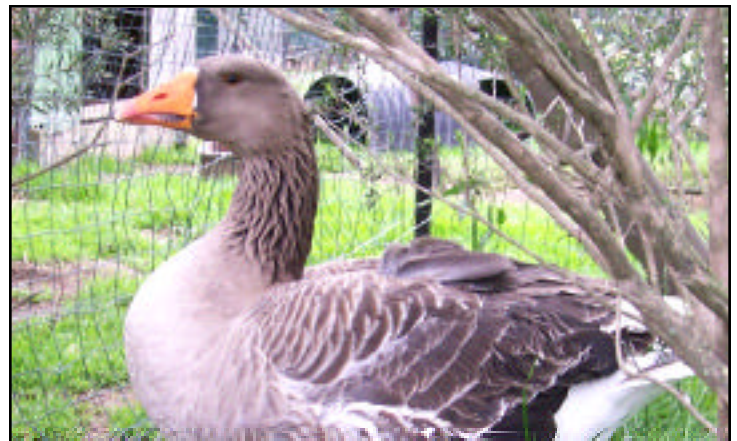


There's an old saying "time flies when you're having fun", I think there could also be another saying: "time flies as you age". It doesn't seem as if 12 months has passed yet here I am again sitting in front of the computer during my annual winter hibernation from work, looking out on yet another bleak winter's day. The currawongs and the cockatoos are out in force, helping themselves to the residents' feed, as they do at this time of year. The hens, roosters and turkeys don't seem to mind the visitors and are all mostly sitting closely with one another staying warm in the shelter of the houses. Likewise after their morning tour the geese have settled under the casuarinas and are unlikely to move till later this afternoon. The pride are ensconced on their favourite lounges or chairs throughout the house and the sheep are happily munching their way through their "new" paddock as I opened the gate to one of the rested paddocks, which is now a rich dark green, earlier this week.

Of course on days like today I cannot help but think of the sheep elsewhere, the mums who are desperately trying to protect their bubs in such conditions. Winter time also signifies lambing season and you don't have to wander too far to come across paddocks of sheep and lambs. The Canberra Times recently did its annual story about the lamb losses the 'poor' farmers suffer at this time of year, talking about the monetary losses lamb deaths represent for the farmers without any mention of the toll on the lambs themselves and the impact on their mothers. It just makes you want to scream sometimes.

As I sit and type I counter the negative thoughts in my mind with reflections of the great things which have taken place recently.

During the past few weeks 29 new residents have joined us – a goose, five ducks, six roosters and 17 hens; and through a little networking another seven found a safe forever home elsewhere as well. In most cases the newcomers arrived after requests were made. In one it was a simple case of fate.



One morning as I was heading down to the bus stop on my way to work I saw a goose standing in the middle of the road. I thought perhaps it was one of the residents from here, who had flown out of the top paddock, even though this would be highly unusual behaviour. The goose quickly waddled through the open gate and I quickly made my way up the top to make sure the others were okay. As it was highly unusual for one of the geese to be out on the road I feared something may have spooked them like a fox or dog but all 31 resident geese were up there in the paddock so the one who was now happily munching on the greenery in the driveway was from somewhere else. I had to get to the bus stop so I close the gate behind me leaving goosey happily contented in the drive, deciding to sort things out upon my return home. Unsurprisingly no one came looking for a lost goose and the couple of people I asked had seen the goose on the road that morning and assumed she was from here as no one close by has geese. So after a few days she was introduced to the others and is now part of the gaggle. I put it down to a case of being in the right place at the right time. Had I not allowed her into the drive I fear she would have probably been hit by a car or attacked by a dog during her adventure.

Another happy incident was the adoption of a chook family from a wonderful family from Sydney's northern beaches. It all began with an email from Adriana: "Hi, Due to a grumpy neighbour we are looking for a home for our eight chickens, variety of breeds and include one beautiful Cochin Buff rooster (six-months-old). If you can take any or know someone who will take them and give them a good home, please let me know, because they are much loved family pets." The request was timely as there was a spare night shed available and I told Adriana I could provide a home for Lemon, Rosie, Cheeky, Twiggy, Fluffy, Coco and co (pictured below left). At the same time my friends at NSW Hen Rescue were contacted by another person on the northern beaches who had four hens named Pipper, Poppen, Peaches and Penny, who were apparently much loved as well but given they were no longer laying had to go – it would appear they weren't that much loved after all! The women who had these four was unwilling to transport them much beyond her front gate but thankfully our frustration was solved as Adriana agreed to go and collect these four and bring them down to A Poultry Place with her chook family. When Adriana's family went to say goodbye to their flock her young daughter picked each individually and gave them a hug – it brought tears to my eyes, and it was then I learnt that the youngster refused to eat chicken because of her pets – an example of what can happen to someone when they make the connection between what they eat and what they pat.



I was also happy to take in another much loved family poultry flock. Alicia, reluctantly had to rehome her flock due to her father selling his property. "I have found a beautiful farm out near Tumut that a lady is willing to take some. They will have a good life there but then meet there maker at her choosing," Alicia wrote to me. Sensing her desperation, as she really didn't want her bubs to eventually end up being someone's dinner – I offered to take them all and Sailor the rooster, Chickpea the hen, Bruce the drake and six others came to join us (pictured above right).

I recently learnt that a parent I gave some information to about school hatching projects, when she surrendered five hatching project boys to me earlier this year, passed on the info to her child's preschool and was told as a result that they would no longer be involved in the school hatching project program. Little victories like this are great and when I posted this outcome on Facebook I received more than a dozen requests from other for said information so that they too could lobby their child's teachers and school to prevent hatching project becoming part of their child's studies.

But definitely without doubt the high point for me personally in recent weeks was being part of the Sydney March To Close Down All Slaughterhouses, where I shared the stage with one of my heroes – Christine Townend, who began Animal Liberation NSW back in 1976. The march and rally exceeded expectations, with so many people attending the police were forced to close off part of

one of Sydney's busiest streets, George St, to allow the march to proceed. For me it was the realisation of a wish I had made some 15 years ago at another rally about stopping the sale of pound dogs for use in animal experimentation. At the time I said to my dear friend Lynda I hope one day we have part of a main street in Sydney closed for a rally about food animals – I am so glad I was there to witness the day. ●



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