

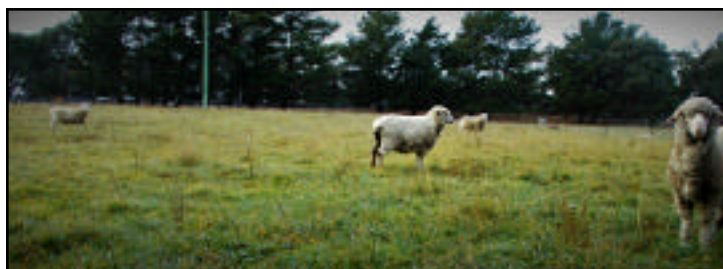


**UPDATE
MAY 2019**

After a long, hot, dry summer and an unseasonably warm, dry autumn the weather has turned as we head into winter this week with the night-time temperature beginning to fall below zero. It's still dry and even if we received lots of rain now it wouldn't assist much growth in the paddocks due to the colder temperatures not being conducive to grass growth. Though of course lots of rain may help refill the dam, which still sits dry, much to the geese and ducks' displeasure. The Bureau of Meteorology said this autumn was among the warmest five autumns on records which began being kept in 1910.



A scheduled hay delivery never arrived this week so I have been forced to allow the sheep into the last remaining paddock that has any feed on it. I



was hoping I could delay doing so for a few weeks – but as the saying goes needs must. Of course such a situation doesn't make for a good outlook this winter and I've no doubt it's probably going to be more challenging than previous ones. The Bureau of Meteorology predicts it will be “a milder and drier than usual winter”.

In August it will be 20 years since I moved down here and I have to say it has never been so dry for so long – we are heading into year three of way below average rainfall and it's really telling. We've had some really windy weather here in recent weeks, which has brought down big branches from some of the trees onto fences, which adds to the workload, that is already burdensome due to the extra things brought about by the drought like hand-feeding the sheep hay.

Of course I continue to receive many requests for rehoming from across the country and even overseas. And as usual a number made my blood boil like this:

“Hi Bede! We have three gorgeous chickens who have been the loves of our lives for two years. Their names are Caramel, Toffee and Jen. They are all ISA Browns and we bought them to teach our kids about eggs and where their food comes from. They are at the stage now where they aren't laying very much any more and we unfortunately can't afford to keep them, as they cost us so much in terms of food and time. We probably get about three good eggs a week in total. Two of the chickens love to be cuddled. Would you have any room at your chicken retirement village to take our sweet girls???? We are in Canberra and I have read that you are near Canberra somewhere?”

Re-read again and see the disconnect – they are supposedly loved pets, yet as they aren't producing enough eggs and costing money to feed are being discarded. I responded and seemed to have some effect (maybe) as I got this back: *“Hi Bede. My kids are very sad and do not want to give the chickens up. They are begging me to keep them, so I will hold onto them for a bit longer! So hard when they are pets as well. Looks like we will soldier on with them!”*

And another one: *“We have a couple of Isa Browns past their laying date. We have a small area only and need it for egg producers. Could you accept our sweet ladies? We are happy to give a donation to cover their care in declining years.”* Yeap at least this person offered a donation.

And then this one arrived: *“Hi, we are looking at incubating some chicken eggs and are wondering if you know of a place on Sydney's Northern Beaches where we could send our (possible) roosters. I really do not want to start this project without knowing what we can do with our roosters.”* While this person at least had the sense to realise there was a 50:50 chance any resulting chicks could be roosters (trust me many don't) my response wasn't too helpful given that no council in Sydney allows people to keep roosters due to complaints from neighbours about noise.

I never got a response so unsure if this backyard hatching project went ahead.

Which brings me to new arrivals – there were 15 chicks and a duckling (pictured right) who arrived from a hatching project which took place in a Sydney pre-school. It meant I had to play mother again but happy to report they are now quiet independent and beginning to enjoy life at A Poultry Place.



May was International Respect for Chickens Month and once again as I have done since I put A Poultry Place on facebook seven years ago I posted a photo and information about chickens each day throughout the month with the intention being to encourage people to rethink their attitude towards, and "use" of, chickens; and, for them to share with their family, friends and work colleagues. The posts were well received by the more than 5000 facebook followers the sanctuary has attracted, with many being shared which meant they reached even a bigger audience. One of the posts reached more than 30,000 people according to the statistics. International Respect for Chickens Month is an initiative launched in 2005 by USA organisation United Poultry Concerns to celebrate chickens throughout the world and protest the bleakness of their lives in farming operations. That's it for now. Thanks for your ongoing interest in the sanctuary.

TO VISIT A POULTRY PLACE EMAIL freechook@bigpond.com

**DONATIONS ARE WELCOMED AND CAN BE DIRECTLY DEPOSITED INTO THE FOLLOWING BANK ACCOUNT BSB 012925 ACCOUNT 484228991
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