

Greetings from Link'd Hearts Ranch and the Link Family,

Last year proved to be a good year for us on the farm and as a family. Here is a quick recap of events:

*Spring:* We kept busy with normal farm work of chicks in the brooder, lambs born, and garden starts planted. We were shorthanded at home with Joey and Rich participating in the high school robotics team. Joey was the Robot Operator last year and Rich was a full time Mentor. They spent much of late winter and early spring either in the lab or traveling for competitions. That left Alyssa, Andy, and Cora to manage the farm. It was during this crazy time period that our family really noticed the extent of Andrew's personal struggles to cope with daily life. We decided that although time was of a premium, Andy needed the care of professionals. We are so glad now that we packed all those trips to the doctor and psychiatrist into our busy spring schedule, as he is now doing much better. Just when it all seemed to be falling into chaos our family found peace and clarity as to what was most important to us. We spent the rest of the season evaluating everything on our farm with a new light of making it work around our family needs.

*Summer:* We switched varieties of meat chicken for 2018 as well as adjusted the summer chicken timeline. The results were everything we could have hoped for - we averaged just over 5 pounds per chicken across the season. We received rave reviews about the meaty birds from customers and so moving forward we will be sticking to this new variety and timeline. In mid-summer we sold our breeding stock of sheep knowing that lambing was going to be harder for us in the coming years. It was heart-breaking to see them leave but we were consoled in keeping a couple of our oldest sheep so we can continue to admire their beauty and allow them a happy retirement keeping the pastures trimmed. At the end of summer our family was able to get away from the farm for several days for our first family vacation in 7 years. Our farm intern Jocelyn was able to hold things together for us and we are so grateful to have had that opportunity to spend time as a family.

*Autumn:* Joey passed his driver's test and announced his intention to pursue an off-farm internship next summer. Andrew attended his first American Rabbit Breeders Association show and has found a love for his rabbitry and hobby. Cora joined a new 4H club to learn more about showing her horse and growing in her horse skills. We found our family needing an additional source of income so in October, Alyssa started working an off-farm job. As the holidays approached, we were confident in our decisions for moving the farm forward this year.

Looking back, 2018 was all about the theme of family for us. Hard decisions are never easy but now we are relieved to know we are putting our family first and allowing our farm to mold around us rather than farm life controlling us. There are 3 main areas of our farm that are being put on hiatus for an indefinite period. The first was already mentioned, we will no longer have lamb for sale as we no longer have a breeding flock. If you are interested in purchasing lamb, we can help you contact our good friends and neighbors Eric and Sheryl Zakarison for your lamb needs. The second area of our farm being scaled back is turkeys. We have removed them from our order form in 2019. Even after the price increase last year, the size our operation proved that we were still operating at a loss. Additionally, the burden of managing turkeys with the pressure of

deposits was too much for us mentally. We will still raise a few turkeys for personal use, but we do not anticipate selling any in 2019. The third area of our farm being put on hiatus is our U-pick CSA. The CSA was the most labor-intensive part of our farm and with Joey pursuing an off-farm internship this year and moving off to college the next, we need to scale back our labor demand. Additionally, we are eager to use cover crops to suppress weeds so that in future years our weed pressure will be reduced. Richard purchased a much-desired hoop house for our farm as a Christmas gift for Alyssa. This will allow our family to garden with an extended season on a smaller footprint of land that we hope will be easier to manage for our personal needs.

For 2019, you will find a very simplified order form. Chicken will be raised in 3 batches this year, the same schedule as last year. The timing will be shifted by a couple of weeks so that Alyssa can travel to watch one of Joey's out of town Robotics competitions without the worry of having early chicks in the brooder. Joey is team Captain this year, so the whole family is excited to go cheer for him and the team. We will be accepting chicken orders now via email, postal mail or at the Pullman Farmers Market. When our hens begin to lay again in the coming months, we anticipate having eggs available at market for purchase. If you are interested in pork, Joey is hoping to raise some pigs this year. However, without having piglets available yet, rather than take deposits this early in the year, we are taking names for a waiting list and we will contact interested customers when we know for certain what we will have available to raise.

We thank you all for your continued support of our family and our farm. If you have any questions or concerns about our changes, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,  
AlyssaMarie, Richard, Joey, Andy and Cora Link