

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcast. Today's episode is all about how to take a vacation when you have a homestead or even just a small property and some animals because let's face it, whether you have a homestead now or you're dreaming of getting one in the future, it's kind of a big concern. You know, we don't want to get this life we love, but then never be able to leave it again for the rest of our lives. There's all times where we need to get away to visit family, you know, just have a little vacation, whatever, and we don't want to be tied down to the property for the rest of our lives. I am proof that you can have the homestead you want. I have a milk cow and a garden and horses and dogs and cats, the whole nine yards, and yet we still get away a couple of times a year and everything is fine.
- Speaker 1: [00:59](#) I'm excited to share some of my actionable strategies and secrets for having your homestead and still taking a vacation. I'm your host Jill Winger. For the last 10 years I've been helping folks learn how to leave the rat race and create the life they really want by taking the best of the old ways and weaving them in to our everyday modern lives. This episode was prompted by the fact that we are leaving for my sister's wedding in about eight or nine days. By the time you hear this episode, we will have already have gone and come home. But generally when we're getting ready to leave, preparations start (at least mental preparations) start about now, about seven to 10 days before we actually get on the airplane or leave in the car. Now we have been literally taking vacations or leaving for decent chunks of time ever since we started our homestead.
- Speaker 1: [02:05](#) So this is nothing new. There has been a little bit of a learning curve kind of figuring out our routine and our method of getting away and making sure everything is alive when we get home. But it's doable. I do a lot of traveling for business and you know, we, I speak sometimes at different conferences, so there's just times when I have to go on the airplane. I cannot stay home all the time, be a home body, even though I do love being a home body and the homestead generally just keeps on trucking while I'm gone. Here are a few of the things that we do and the ways that we set up our homestead that keep things flowing when we leave. First off, it's really important to be selective about which times of year you're going to be traveling. Now this is going to differ depending on what type of homes that you have and what type of animals or gardens that you have going at a given time.
- Speaker 1: [03:06](#) For us, I find that leaving in the winter month, which is, you know, December, January, February, those are a little bit easier

for us just because the garden is very dead at that point. Nothing needs to be watered, you know, it's pretty easy to just give everything lots of food and water and head out. Now the one downfall to leaving in winter month. If you live in a very cold climate like we do, there is more risk of things freezing, right? So you want to make sure your house, and this is true, whether you live in town or in the country, you want to make sure your house has a heat source, is going to keep the pipes from freezing. If you have outside animals, you have to make sure that there's a way for their water to not be continually frozen over with six inches of ice. Whether you have heaters or you have just a trustworthy neighbor who comes and hacks on it with an ax every day, that that's one concern with winter travel.

Speaker 1: [04:09](#) For us though, that concern is slightly less than the watering that comes with summertime because there's a lot of it and that's kind of a big deal. So we are very picky about when we leave. You know, right now the time of this recording, it's June, which is the month for weddings. My sister's getting married in a week or two and so we can't really avoid leaving right now, but there's a lot going on, right? The gardens coming up. Everything needs to be watered when you leave for more than a day or two, the weeds just take over. So it's a little bit trickier to leave during the summer, at least for us.

Speaker 1: [04:52](#) Another tip, which is kind of an obvious one, is to find a trusted caregiver. Even though we do a lot of different strategies to really minimize how much work there is when we're gone, you still really are gonna want to have someone come and check on things, especially if you're gone for more than a day or two. You know, maybe if it's just an overnight or you can get away with filling up all the feeders in, the water's really full and calling it good. But for us, we always have a neighbor coming up just to check on things just to make sure nothing weird is happening. Cause you know, animals can get sick or get caught in a fence. We've never had something like that happen. But I'm always thinking about that in the back of my mind. So this time around we have our nephews thing here and he's going to be house-sitting and watching the dogs, doing the watering and just keeping an eye on things, which I really do prefer to have someone here at the house if possible just cause it gives me more peace of mind.

Speaker 1: [05:55](#) But there's been plenty of times when we have someone come up once a day and that works as well. Now generally this kind of brings me to my next point about minimizing chores. And this applies to actually when you're not on vacation as well because

the more you can minimize or streamline your chores, even when you're home, the better because it just frees up your schedule more. It prevents burnout, it just keeps things flowing. But I do like to keep chores, especially when we're on vacation down to a minimum so they can be accomplished in one visit per day. When we are having neighbors come up to check the place, I generally kind of hate to ask them to come up twice a day. That's a lot because most of them live at least a few miles away. I try to shoot for once a day, usually in the morning and call it good.

Speaker 1: [06:50](#) Now let's dive into a few of the specifics of how we actually do that chore minimization because it's gonna depend a little bit on what type of animals you have and where you live. But I think if you have the strategies that we use the most are pretty universal, so you might get some good ideas from this. Okay, so chickens, I know a lot of you have chickens. There are ways to keep chickens simplified. What we do when we're ready to leave is we have a big chicken feeder. You might have one just like we do pretty basic. We fill it really full and they kind of just free choice feed while we're gone. Now free choice feeding isn't always a great option because they can get a little chubby. It gives a chance for the mice to come and steal food so you could actually create kind of a rodent problem.

Speaker 1: [07:47](#) It creates a little bit more waste, but for five to seven days if we're on vacation, I feel like it's doable. It's okay trade-off. And so we'll just let them do the free choice thing. One little side note, if your chickens have never had free choice feed their entire lives, I'd probably just wouldn't give them a giant five gallon bucket when you're like heading out of the driveway because they could eat too much and make themselves sick and gorge themselves, you just don't know. If you are going to switch over to free choice feeding, make sure that you give them a little bit of an adjustment period first. As far as chicken watering goes, there are some pretty cool chicken automatic waters on the market. We actually don't have one of those yet. I just fill a big tub or a pan with water.

Speaker 1: [08:42](#) Sometimes in the summer when we have a waterfowl like ducks or geese, we'll have a big swimming pool or not a big swimming pool. It's like a kitty pool, right? One of the plastic blue ones. And that's filled at all times, so I know that's another, if their initial water pan is empty, they have the pool, but our caregiver, whoever that is, a neighbor, whoever, they usually will check the chickens or they will check the chickens every single day and that's just going to ensure that the water is good. They don't have to fill the feed everyday, but they're just going to check

that and make sure nothing weird has happened and that usually is plenty sufficient to keep the chickens happy and healthy while we're gone. Now, one issue we have had when we are traveling is predators. Now, even when we don't have regular predators coming through, it seems like when our place gets quiet, especially if the dogs are at the Kennel and we're not out in the yard all day, we tend to have more of an issue with coyotes or raccoons coming around, so that is something you'll want to keep in mind if you have your chickens outside.

Speaker 1: [09:52](#)

Right now we have ours locked in our coop because we're rebuilding our chicken run so it's not ideal because it can get a little hot in there. Um, but we'll probably leave them in there while we're gone. Just to reduce any Predator attraction. Once we get our chicken run finish, it's going to have really tall walls and probably as ceiling of wire on top. And then I'll feel pretty good about letting them go in and out of the chicken coop at will into the run. And I won't be as concerned about predators coming by cause they're not going to be able to access them as easily. Now when it comes to large animals, like for us, that's horses and cattle. We keep those really low maintenance pretty much year round even when we're home. When we feed in the winter time, we feed big round bales.

Speaker 1: [10:45](#)

They're the kind that you have to move with a tractor. And I realize that's not an option for everyone. But if you do have the ability to move those, you have the equipment in this space, these save a lot of time because you're not out there flaking hay to your animals, you know, twice a day. So we let our horses in, cattle on the big bales and that'll usually last, depending on how many animals we have, four to five days. If we're gone longer than that, we have the neighbor come up and put another bail in our feeder. But sometimes for our shorter trips we don't even have to do that because it'll last all the way through. And the summertime, of course, that's actually one area that gets even easier because we can just turn the animals out to pasture super easy. They're good to go and we don't have to worry about it.

Speaker 1: [11:35](#)

For watering our large animals, we have a giant tractor tire like I'm talking, you could almost, well you could take a bath in it if you want it. It's kind of gross sometimes. Or a little swimming pool size is pretty good size and we have that with a concrete base and we fill that with water. And put a float on the hose that regulates the water level. That doesn't work in the winter cause it'll freeze and it'll break the float and then you'll have a disaster. But in the summertime when there's no danger of frost, it works really well. We just let the hose run to the float,

turn on the Faucet, leave it on, and it regulates those water levels, which is important in the summer because the animals drink so much more and it's just a lot more work to be filling it with a hose, you know, twice a day.

Speaker 1: [12:29](#)

Along with the large animals, many of you know we have dairy cattle and that's probably the one area of homesteading that people really, really get concerned about tying them down. Milk cows, dairy goats, it's considerable, you know, it's an amount of chores that's far beyond your regular chickens and gardening and whatever. That being said, we still are able to keep our milk cows and travel. Now, full disclosure, right now our cows are dried up, which means they are not in milk and we are not milking them. It's kind of a long story. We'll talk about this on a future episode. We got a little bit off track with our breeding. Christian has been working through trying to figure out if he potentially has a dairy allergy. So we were a little bit slower to breed them back cause we weren't drinking as much milk and so we're going to be breeding our cattle this month, then they'll be calving next year.

Speaker 1: [13:30](#)

We're gonna have a period without milking, which is sad because I love the fresh milk, but it also simplifies my life just a little bit. But anyway, we had still had plenty of vacations where we've had a cow and milk and we have still left. This is a little trickier to coordinate, but still a hundred percent doable. What we do is we will leave the calf or if you have goats, the kids, right. We will leave those on the mother. So on the cow or on the doe while we're gone. And it just really solves all the problems because we're not having to give the babies the bottle and we're not having to find someone to come milk Mama and everyone's happy. Now of course there are going to be a few times a year or maybe just one time. I think primarily where you don't have a baby on the Momma, there's a period of time when you get ready to ween the baby where you are going to be milking kinda solo for that period.

Speaker 1: [14:38](#)

And that's going to be a time where I would recommend you're gonna either have to find someone to do milking chores for you or just not leave. Cause that is the most intense period of keeping a dairy animal. However, if you schedule your year out, that period isn't super long and you can even leave the calf or the kids on a little bit extra if you know you're going to be traveling during that time, you know, just don't ween them until later in the year. And so that will take care of that issue. There are ways to work around it with a dairy animal. But for us, choosing to have the calf with the cow and just milking once a day, even when we're home has been the best option for us.

And I will definitely go in deeper into our once a day milking routine in a future episode.

Speaker 1: [15:30](#) So stay tuned for that. Alrighty. So I know you may not have a milk cow. Hopefully that was interesting. Just that you kind of hear how it goes, but I bet you probably have a garden or even just some beds or some pots. How do you leave when you have veggies growing? We have a raised bed gardens that up, but that really, you know, these tips we use applied to you, whether you have raised beds or pots or just an in ground garden. One of the very best things we ever did with our garden was to put in a drip system. It's an automatic watering system and it took a little bit of work, took a little bit of up front investment, you know, buying all the pipes. Then the sprinkler attachments, it has been a lifesaver because hey, when you water plants they grow better.

Speaker 1: [16:26](#) And I actually didn't realize that even when I was home hand watering or watering with a sprinkler, I wasn't quite watering as much as I should be. Cause you know life gets in the way and you may be cut the time short or you forget on a given day. So the automatic water has been fantastic for actually helping my plants grow. Imagine that, but it makes us being able to leave much less stressful because the sprinklers are on a timer. We have them come on twice a day for just a few minutes. Then everything stays watered. So if you do plan on having a large garden, I would highly recommend just doing the footwork to set up some sort of automatic automated system. It's going to save you a lot of headache, whether you're home or you're on vacation. Now of course we know we have our big garden, this automated, but I still have little pots and pieces of the yard that need watered.

Speaker 1: [17:24](#) That is an area that if we are gone in the summer, I do have to have someone come and water those. One thing I do with my pots, I like to, it's a little bit more work for me, but I like to pull them off of all the various areas of the yard and just kind of put them all on my porch so the caretaker can find them easily. There's no danger of them missing a pot or missing a section. And I also, this may not be applicable to you depending on where you live, but we have horrendous hail in the summer, just damaging devastating hail and you never know when it's coming. And when I'm home and I see the weather forecasts, I run outside like a mad woman and bring all my pots in. But when I'm gone, you know, that's not a possibility as well.

Speaker 1: [18:14](#) So I pull all the pots and I, we have like an iron table and chairs that is kinda grated or has slats though. It's partially, you know,

open air. It's not like a solid table, but I stick all my pots under the table and under the chairs, which looks bizarre, but it just shields the pots from if there were really large hailstones it's going to give them a nice buffer but it still allows them to get sunshine because it's not like a solid top, if that makes sense. So that's my little trick with pots and watering. The other thing I like to do, and I'm actually working on this today and tomorrow in preparation for our upcoming trip and that is to mulch like crazy mulch, mulch, mulch. Right now I'm mulching with grass clippings from the yard because we have prairie grass, right?

Speaker 1: [19:10](#)

We had to mow the prairie grass around the yard. So we put that in our bagger and I've been using that because it's pesticide free, herbicide free. We don't spray it so it's safe. And I've been mulching that in my vegetable garden just to cut down on weeds and keep the soil nice and damp. And I believe, I'm hoping, fingers crossed that when we do leave in a couple of weeks, we're going to have a little bit easier time when we come home. And that's going to suppress the weeds just a bit. So I'll let you know how that goes. So those are my best tips for leaving with a homestead. It's going to be a little bit different depending on your situation and what sort of animals and plants that you have and your unique climate. But it is so doable, I promise. Just takes a little bit of creativity, a little ingenuity and a little bit of thinking ahead, but it's good and healthy to leave your homes that once in awhile get away, especially if you're feeling a little bit tired or a little bit burned out, you're going to come back home with though much renewed passion for the lifestyle is just absolutely worth the effort.

Speaker 1: [20:21](#)

As you start planning out your next vacation, I encourage you to start thinking right now about how you can minimize your current chores. And remember, this is going to help you even when you're not vacationing. You know, we want to keep homesteading streamlined and simple because if we overcomplicate it, we're going to be prone to, you know, ditch it if that couple of years because we're just burned out. To prevent that burnout and keep yourself loving this lifestyle that you've built, think about how you can minimize chores, whether that's mulching your garden, installing an automated water for your animals or your garden, you know, feeding larger bales of Hay, whatever. Get creative with your situation, but it's going to make your life easier all the way around. If you are ready to do this homesteading thing, but you're feeling just a little unsure of where or how to start, well that's my specialty. I happen to have an entire library of resources that I've created for homesteaders just like you. And you can get complimentary access to this

library right now at [theprairiehomestead.com/grow](http://theprairiehomestead.com/grow) and we'll leave that link in the show notes now. That's all for this episode. Thank you so much for listening and remember, please subscribe and drop a quick review over on iTunes. That would mean so much to me. That's all for now, but I can't wait to chat with you in the next episode of the old fashioned on purpose podcast.