

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcast. So it's no secret that hands down animals are my favorite part of homesteading. And as much as I enjoy gardening, if I had to choose, I would pick the cows and the horses and the chickens over the garden every single time. In today's episode, I'm going to share some of my best tricks for stocking your homestead with the farm animals you need without breaking the bank. I'm your host Jill Winger and for the last 10 years I have been helping people just like you who feel uninspired by modern life. I'll show you how to leave the rat race and create the life you really want by growing your own food and mastering old fashioned skills. So some of you have heard our homesteads story or how we started this whole thing and animals really have been the catalyst for this whole journey since day one.
- Speaker 1: [01:08](#) So I was a horse girl as some of you know, literally since the day I was born. I was one of those girls that was obsessed with horses, except I never really grew out of it. And it was kind of to the point where I was 18 years old and people were going, Oh my gosh, Jill is still the horse crazy little girl and when is this going to like fade into the background? And it never did. So here I am. But anyway, horses are what brought me to Wyoming. And then after I met Christian and we got married, horses were the thing that caused us to start looking for land. So we had a couple horses at the time. We were renting a place out in the country, super cheap rent. We had our horses boarded there and about a year into our marriage we decided it was time to buy our first home, you know, get this starter house.
- Speaker 1: [01:59](#) But instead of getting the normal starter house in town with a little white picket fence, we wanted a place with land for the horses. So at that point in time, I hadn't even considered the idea of homesteading or growing our own food. All it was for me was just land and a barn for the horses. That's all I cared about. And then, you know, fast forward, long story short, that horse land very, very quickly transformed into this obsession for what else can I do with this land. And of course, as I began to conceptualize growing your own food and making the land productive, farm animals were really very logical progression. So the good news for us at that point is I had been a vet tech for a couple of years. I had experience with horses, you know, large animals, cattle. And so I felt comfortable the idea of expanding our animal operation, especially if they would help us produce eggs and milk and meat.
- Speaker 1: [03:08](#) And so pretty quickly into our homesteading journey, I basically started impulse buying farm animals, which I wouldn't recommend maybe for everyone, but that's kind of how we roll.

So I want to give you some tips today for finding animals for your homestead because I don't necessarily, or at least in the past, we haven't gone the typical route to uh, get animals. We've kinda done some different avenues and then also some common pitfalls or things you need to be aware of as you collect your animal herd. So first off, a few things to consider before you take this animal plunge because I get it. It is so enthralling as you're dreaming of your homestead and you're picturing the chickens in the front yard and you're picturing walking down with your silver milk bucket in the morning to milk your goat or your cow and you just want to do it now.

Speaker 1: [04:09](#)

So I've seen folks make some mistakes over the years. I've made some mistakes in the whole animal end of things. So a few things to remember. Number one, before you go bring home a goat in the back seat of your minivan, take into account your zoning and homeowners association rules. Depending on where you live, this may or may not be a big deal. And maybe even if you don't have a homeowner's association that prohibits chickens or goats, the zoning laws of your city or County will. It's really heartbreaking to bring home the fuzzy baby goat or the chickens and have to get rid of them a week later because the neighbors turned you in. And it turns out that you can't have animals where you live. So make sure you understand those rules first. The good news is that more and more cities and towns are allowing for things like backyard chickens.

Speaker 1: [05:11](#)

Some people in cities are even allowed to have a goat or two. So I feel like we're expanding a little bit as a culture in our acceptance of that. But not all towns and cities have the same regulations. So be careful. Another thing to keep in mind or ask yourself is do you have the appropriate facilities? Now I am totally guilty of this one where I get caught up in the moment of the excitement of thinking about getting this animal when in reality we really didn't have the proper setup for them. So I feel like there's a little bit of a balance between this because I've seen some folks get so hung on things having to be perfect before they bring home the first chicken that you know they're putting their chicken buying five years down the road because they are just insistent upon having this fantastic coop.

Speaker 1: [06:11](#)

So you don't have to make it overly complicated. And I would not put off your dreams or goals because you are waiting for the perfect situation to arise or the perfect set up. However, you need to have the basics. You know, you need to be able for the animals to have shelter, especially if you live in a windy or a cold climate like we do, you need to have available water. Like trust me, you might think you're going to haul water and not, it

might not bother you at first. You are not going to like to do that. Longterm hauling water in the winter is not fun. So make sure you have water to where the animal will be. Make sure you have electricity. If it's a cold climate where you live and you're having chickens and you might need heat lamps, maybe you need a heat and water tank for your larger livestock.

Speaker 1: [07:04](#)

So just make sure you have those considerations planned out before you bring the critters home because you don't want to give them a less than optimal living situation just because you weren't prepared. Another thing to consider is can you afford feeding the animal? Do you have the ability to get them food? And I see a lot of times this gets kind of sad in the spring because folks go crazy buying chicks from the feed store cause they're cute and they're fluffy and they're small and then the chicks grow into actual chickens, believe it or not, and they eat a lot of food and they're not as cute anymore and people are offloading them. So you don't want to do that. Whether it's chickens or goats or cows, you want to make sure you understand the longterm ramifications of keeping this animal what it's going to cost to feed them.

Speaker 1: [07:59](#)

Because some of these animals are costly. If you're raising, for example, pigs for meat, you know hogs, they eat a lot of food and it's not cheap if you're buying that from the feed store. So make sure you've mapped out what it's going to cost and if that works with your budget. And lastly, this is kind of a do as I say, not as I do sort of thing, but avoid the urge to impulse buy. Yes, I've done it. It's kind of how I roll. But it often creates a lot of stress. So try to have some plan in place before you go crazy and bring chickens home in your car. Again, I have probably not been a great example for this because impulse bought chickens and goats and our milk cow and many things since, and it worked out okay for us, but it can be a lot of stress that don't need.

Speaker 1: [08:57](#)

Okay. So now that you are fully prepared and you've thought through this process, let's talk about where you can find your farm animals. Because sometimes, you know, if you've never bought a chicken in your life, that can be a little bit daunting. Like how on earth do you find a cow or a goat or whatever you need. So obviously for chickens, the easiest place to get them if you're looking for chicks would be your local feed store or a mail order hatchery. There's a couple of different hatcheries. I think Marie MacMurray is one. Meyer hatchery is another. You can actually mail the chicks to you. And most of the time that works out, I have had issues with chicks dying in shipment to due to

various factors, whether they got too cold on the mail truck or the post office didn't call me in time.

Speaker 1: [09:53](#)

And that's super sad when that happens. So because of that, even though I can get a larger variety of chicken breeds, if I do mail order, I usually try to stick with just getting them from my local feed store because then I don't have to worry about getting a box of dead chicks. The tricky part with feed stores is sometimes they run out of inventory or they don't have the wider variety of breeds. So you kind of got to see what's available in your area and go with that. Another option, and this is my favorite option, I think for really any animal, whether it's a goat or a cow or maybe mature chickens, if you're wanting to skip the chick phase and just jump right into a mature laying hen would be, believe it or not, sale ad venues like Facebook or Craigslist. I have found our goats and our milk cow on Craigslist and also a lot of homesteading stuff goes through Facebook groups.

Speaker 1: [11:00](#)

Now, more recently, Facebook has tried to ratchet it down a little bit on the sales of animals in their groups, which I find kind of annoying because a lot of these are very legitimate animals sales. There's like not, not a puppy mill or anything negative. It's just a very legitimate owner trying to find a home for this goat or this cow or this chicken and Facebook shuts down the ad. So sometimes you can get a little more undercover and if you don't post prices and you don't post the word sale, you can find people selling goats or cows on Facebook. But Craigslist is still a good place. Just, you know, look for the farm listings in your area. I always make sure there's pictures and such, but I found a lot of good stuff on Facebook and that's really my best recommendation for finding good deals locally, is to check those, uh, classifieds or the equivalent of the classifieds first and see what other homesteaders have available.

Speaker 1: [12:03](#)

If you're not seeing a whole lot on those avenues, then another option would be just to find breeders in your area. So I know locally we have several different goat breeders who are breeding more higher end dairy goats. We have local pig breeders, plenty of cattle ranchers, so that's a good option when it comes to breeders. They don't always have animals for sale at that given time. When you're searching, just depends on the season and it depends on what babies they have available. So sometimes you have to get on a waiting list or wait until the next crop. Um, and you may pay a little bit more because generally breeders are going to have pedigreed animals. They're a little higher quality. So you're going to have to balance a higher quality animal coming with a higher price tag. But

depending on what you're looking for or what's important to you, you know, that may be a good thing.

Speaker 1: [13:06](#) You may want that goat with the pedigrees so you can sell the babies for more or maybe you can show it. Just to keep that in mind, it's probably gonna cost a little bit more. Another place to look for dairy animals specifically would be local raw milk dairies in your area. Now, I wouldn't necessarily go to a giant commercial dairy and look for their animals that they're selling, but we have a couple smaller dairies, fairly local to us in Colorado and that's where we found Oakley who is the matriarch of our Brown Swiss cow herd. And this was just a small family run dairy. They only milked, you know, five to eight cows I believe at a time in Oakley was just an extra, she was two years old. They didn't need her and they were looking to sell her. And so that was a fantastic place to get her from because she came from proven milking lines and I knew they had done a good job breeding her for optimal milk production.

Speaker 1: [14:13](#) And they knew their stuff. So that was fantastic. I believe we did something similar with our first round of Nubian dairy goats. They came from a small goat milk dairy also in Colorado. And that worked out well. So see what dairies you have or what homesteaders are selling, milk in your area and see if they have extras. Because to get milk, you breed the animals and that produces offspring. Then a lot of times they're selling that offspring. And then lastly, a great place to check around for farm animals for sale and this one's kind of obvious would just be with your homesteading friends or local homesteading support groups. We've purchased a number of animals from local friends who were either getting out of that particular animal or just had extras. That's been a great option. You know where they come from, you know you can trust the source and it's just a very easy transaction.

Speaker 1: [15:14](#) Another bonus, if you're buying from a friend, they'll often give you lots of information on the animal and can even help you get started with it. So right now we are actually and this will come as a shock to some of you, we're looking at getting back into dairy goats after a decade of being out of that world. Mesa, my nine year old, is really wanting to get some Nigerian dwarfs that she can milk and that'll be her project. Um, and kinda her thing. So we happen to have a friend who has a small herd of really nice Nigerians. So we've been talking to her about the possibilities of getting some from her. Um, and we haven't said yes yet. We haven't pulled the trigger, but that is just really nice. It's local. I know her, I know her standards of care. And by

all means, if we can swing getting goats from her, I'm gonna pick that over any other source.

Speaker 1: [16:12](#) So ask around if you're looking, start putting out feelers and seeing what friends and local homestead groups have to offer. Okay. So as you are shopping and all these different places and getting your facilities ready, there's a few things to keep in mind as you're shopping. Cause sometimes what you'll see online or for sale can be a little bit too good to be true. So just a few little warnings just so you're aware as you shop. Okay. So, number one, if you're looking for chickens, avoid older chickens or roosters. Now the rooster one might be obvious to some of you, others, you know, roosters might seem fun to collect because sometimes they're free and they're, it seems like a never ending supply of them on Facebook groups or on Craigslist. Avoid a lot of roosters, right? Roosters, fight. A lot of roosters can be very aggressive and sometimes even dangerous.

Speaker 1: [17:14](#) So avoid the free roosters. Fight the urge to start a rooster rescue, unless that's your thing. And also be wary of the older chickens. Sometimes you'll see hens for sale for very, very cheap. Um, but they're older, and once they're older, they're gonna be no longer laying or laying very minimally. So you'll end up with a flock of geriatric chickens that you are feeding and getting zero eggs from. So if you are going to purchase older chickens that were someone else's, let's call them used chickens, make sure I would say no more than one to two years old. So you can get maximum egg production before they're in their golden years. So our first flock of chickens that I impulse bought on a Saturday night was a flock of of hens that were mature, but they were only about a year old. And so I decided to get those because I wouldn't have to wait for them to get to egg laying age.

Speaker 1: [18:21](#) And I think he only wanted eight bucks or 10 bucks a chicken they were currently laying. And I knew I could get them home and they would lay immediately. But they were still in that sweet spot where they were laying but not too old where they were going to start tapering down right away. And when it comes to dairy animals, cows or goats, make sure that you're not getting an animal with udder issues. So sometimes if a cow or goat has had a lot of mastitis, they can have a quarter or a teat of their udder that is no longer working. And that can be definitely a downfall because it reduces milk production. Also, sometimes certain cows or goats are prone to mastitis or they're prone to something called milk fever, which can be deadly. So before you purchase an animal, make sure you're asking those questions, has she had mastitis before. Do all of

her quarters function properly or with a goat, they don't have quarters, they just have two teats. But you get the idea as is, you know, as she prone to any issues because if you're getting an animal from a dairy, sometimes they're going to cull the problem animals, the ones that get sick more frequently, maybe they had a Csection which is not desirable. Maybe they get mastitis all the time. So make sure you're doing your homework before you pull out the checkbook.

Speaker 1: [19:54](#)

And lastly, just keep in mind as you shop that quality is always better. And even though it's tempting to grab the mutts and then I don't want to offend anyone with mixed breed animals or um, animals that are, you know, a mixture because they can be great. But at least for us, we have never regretted buying higher quality or better bred animals. Anyone can just let whatever they have breed in random mixtures in the backyard. But when you have someone who has put time and effort into their breeding program, whether they're breeding heritage chickens or milk cows or goats, it shows, it shows in temperament. It shows in production. It shows in just quality. And it, we have found that it almost always pays off to pay a little bit more for a higher quality animal that's been meticulously bred and cared for rather than something that was just a product of, you know, the neighbors goat jumping the fence and breeding this goat and now we just have this hodgepodge of goat bloodlines.

Speaker 1: [21:04](#)

Also, if you plan to breed and sell animals later on, pedigrees or proven bloodlines will allow you to sell that animal at a higher cost. So for example, with our Brown Swiss milk cows, the first few years we just wanted to have milk. So we bred Oakley to just whatever bull we could find. Usually a black Angus bull, which was fine. But what happened is that the calves that resulted were not as desirable. So we had to sell them for lower prices because a lot of people don't want a half beef, half dairy heifer or milking cow, they're not interested. So what we did instead is we took a little more time, a little more effort, and figured out how to find someone who could artificially inseminate Oakley with a Brown Swiss bull. So that gave us a hundred percent Brown Swiss calves and Holy cow you guys, the calves sell like hotcakes because they're 100% Brown Swiss people will buy those all day long.

Speaker 1: [22:12](#)

So just by being more mindful of the quality we went from having a, we've got to offload this calf to having this hot item that people are saying, Hey, do you have any more of those? We want another calf. So keep that in mind. There's definitely exceptions to the rules both ways, but quality is always our preference personally. Whew. That was a fun episode. Okay,

let's wrap this up. So as you are building your dream homestead, animals I think will be one of your favorite parts. And even though it can feel a little bit overwhelming and a little bit out of your comfort zone to get animals for the first time, especially if basically the only thing you've had prior is a cat or a goldfish. I wholeheartedly encourage you to take the plunge. Get the education you need, ask knowledgeable friends and then dive in. It is worth the work and whether you're growing dairy or homegrown meat or eggs, it is delicious.

Speaker 1:

[23:18](#)

All right, my friends, if you are more excited than ever to dive into this homesteading thing that you're feeling a little bit unsure of how to start, I have got you covered. I have an entire library of resources I have put together for homesteaders just like you. It includes garden guides, chicken coop setups, homestead action plans, and more. You can get complimentary access to this library at theprairiehomestead.com/grow one more time, that is theprairiehomestead.com/grow and that is all for this episode. If you have a minute, I would be so honored for you to pop over to iTunes and leave a quick review. If you're so inclined. Thanks for listening and I will see you next time on the next episode of the old fashioned on purpose podcast.