

Episode 6 PP

Start Feeding Your Animals More Affordably

Intro:

Food costs are rising for us. But it isn't just the grocery stores that is seeing an increase in cost. Feed stores and farm stores have raised their feed prices as well. So what do we do? Sell all of our animals to save money? Of course that is an option.

However in this episode I am going to make suggestions for ways you can cut the cost of feed for your animals instead of having to sell them off.

Hi and welcome back to Episode 6 of the Prepping Positively Podcast. I'm Annie, and today it is all about saving money on our feed bills.

Wow, have you been to a feed store lately? Feed prices are getting ridiculously high compared to where they were. It seems on our farm we pay more for animal feed than our own groceries. Isn't that crazy?

Of course, you can sell off your animals, and save a lot right? But who wants to do that if they don't have to? Not this lady. Instead, we have to research ways to be creative, still provide enough nutritional food for our animals and all the while cutting down on the amount of money we spend to do so.

In order to come up with a plan to save money we first must consider each animal's nutritional needs compared to the value of the animal itself to our farm. Let me explain exactly what I mean.

A few years ago we were given a Shetland horse and her pony. We love our girls. They really don't eat as much as a larger breed of horse and the maintenance is really minimal compared to other breeds.

However, we do not, nor does anyone else ride or use the two horses for anything other than a traffic stopper because they are so cute. They just graze the front field.

Often times due to the drought conditions we go through here in Central Florida, we have to provide a lot more hay and feed because the pasture grass dwindles in the high heat,

Now we have another pasture in the back by our lake, however, currently we use that to harvest hay to get through the winter to save money already on our feed and hay bill for both the horses and our zebu cows.

Moving them back there will mean less hay for us in the winter. That means we spend more buying other peoples hay.

For us, we are considering selling the two horses to someone who can maybe use them for pony rides or other activities. That would cut our costs down when it comes to feed. If you have horses and you actually have a use for them to make your homestead easier or to make

an income with, looking for other ways to feed more affordably would make more sense. For us, however, they are really an expense we don't really need.

For situations like that, you have to figure out your priorities.

So you have all the animals you are keeping. You still need to feed them right? So how do we do so more affordably?

Let's start with chickens, Here you have some options. If you live where they can free-range, they will usually get all of the nutrition they need on their own. After all, chickens lived for thousands of years with no help from humans remember.

You can allow your chickens to be moved around the farm by using a chicken tractor. This way they can free-range but still be protected.

However, if they cannot free-range, options are still available.

You can grow grains like millet, corn, wheat and so forth to harvest and feed your chickens. They love many types of fruit and vegetables, even herbs. So if you grow any of these foods, that's a great way to supplement their diet and cut down on feed.

If you do not grow any of the food products that can be given to chickens you may want to consider fermented feed. This is the process where you add water to a bucket of feed, allow it to ferment a few days and then feed it to your chickens. The idea here is that the feed swells, releases more nutrients than dry feed, and fills them up quicker so they consume less feed.

There are plenty of videos and blog posts on making fermented feed on the internet. You just need to do your research.

Another option is growing fodder. Growing fodder for chickens is a lot like growing sprouts for our families. You simply line a tray with a thin layer of seeds inside a bigger tray for water drainage. You then mist the seeds daily and drain off any water. Within a few days, the seed sprouts form a mat that can be pulled out of the tray and cut up and given to your chickens.

If you are smart, you will start a new tray everyday. That way you will always have fodder available. And as a bonus depending on how much you wanna get growing in trays, almost all animals love fodder.

We use barley and other seeds which can be bought in a 50 pound bag from our local hardware store to save money.

You can also start recycling your chickens. What I mean by that is this. You start with chicks. You feed them and let them grow. Save some for layers for eggs for your family and for providing fertile eggs for more chickens. Once those chickens are grown and the new brood is laying, maybe it is time to cull those older chickens and fill your freezer.

Let's move on to other animals. Cows love grass. Can you move them to a better pasture? Can you give them the grass you cut that is healthy for them from other parts of your property? That's a great way to cut down on feed costs. Do you have an unused part of your farm that you can grow alfalfa on?

How about pigs? Pigs are the easiest of all. Do you know what pigs ate on the old-time farms? Everything! Now I am not saying to feed them a ton of junk or food that will hurt them. However, we sell pigs here on our property.

They eat most of the scraps that don't go into the compost pile. They get grass when we cut the fields. They get bread, corn cobs, vegetable parts and pieces and occasionally, stale donuts. Giving them our scraps means less feed for us to buy. We also move our pigs every few months so that they can have fresh ground to eat and root.

Rabbits are in abundance on our farm. We breed some, eat some, and even have a few we just call our pets. We share some alfalfa hay from the cows with them, they get all the vegetable tops. We even grow a ton of food in our veggie gardens just for them.

Now they do get feed but not half as much as we used to feed them because we supplement their feeding with natural foods. This is not a huge saving, but it is a saving none the less.

No matter what animal you are trying to save feed costs with, growing your own grain, providing your own grasses and hay and fermenting and using fodder are all great ways to stretch that food budget.

If your budget allows for it, you could invest in a pellet or feed maker. These machines allow you to add grains and a liquid to create your own pelleted feed. Last time I researched these, the price was a bit steep initially so it would depend on your budget.

One last option is to get together with another farmer and split the cost of bulk amounts of feed. You may even find a brewery that sells the leftover fermented grain in barrels to the local farmers of the area. We have one of those near us and the cost is much lower than buying the same amount of dry feed. Our pigs love it!

So there you have a few ways of lowering the cost of feed in these pricey and challenging times. I hope some of these ideas help you on your farm or homestead.

That's all I have for you today. Make sure to hit that follow button so you don't miss a single episode in the future! And as always have a great week!