



# BUCK-WHEAT BYTES

Volume 4, Issue 3

October 2010

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## Special Membership Directory Insert



Ms. Caleigh Anderson Tells Us Her Story

Just a shout-out to our old friend Bill, aka **Beeyole** - Keep up the good work!!! We're thinking about you and sending you all the hugs and good wishes you could hold!

## As Summer Fades Away.....

by Debbie Starr

I'm writing this as I sit outside on the porch, watching the guineas and chickens in the setting sunlight, thinking about winter. We do not have particularly harsh winters in this part of Texas - discounting the odd year every now and then - but there is still the worry and planning for how to best protect our birds from the cold winds that will blow, and the rain/snow/sleet that will surely fall.

With the State of Texas being so large, the different climates may dictate that I prepare differently than Cindy, in central Texas or Zoe, in a more northern part of the state. I've done my share of going out into the cold wind to close a forgotten window or put in the stronger wattage bulbs these past two years, but I've not ever had to heat any water fountains or take some of the more drastic measures that so many of our

members must. We are lucky to have great members, such as Jack Heller, that are generous enough to take time out of their schedule to write about just how they keep their birds safe and warm in their type of winter.



Did she say Winter? Well, I certainly hope she has a plan!

## Preparing For Winter With Our Guinea Fowl

by Jack Heller

Preparing for winter is a necessary part of life here in the high country of southeastern Montana. Ambient temperatures will regularly drop to -30°F, and it's never a surprise to see -50°F. Wind chill factoring, of course, can substantially drop those numbers further. Of course we also get snow, but not like many other parts of Montana. We always figure on getting 3-4' of snow per season. Fortunately, the snow rarely stands at over 1' on the ground for very long.

Last year was our first winter keeping Guinea fowl. We started the winter with 30 pearl grey Guinea fowl, all of which survived – and indeed thrived. Frankly, we were quite pleasantly surprised that all of the birds made it through the winter.

Closely watching the birds last winter taught us a lot about what to do for our Guinea fowl. This year, we won't have to make as many on-the-fly changes to our setup and feeding as we did last year, in order to help them survive. We will also be able to make our preparations for winter before it arrives.



Cont'd on pg 2

**Feed**

In the winter, we go to a higher protein feed for the Guinea fowl. To this we add about 1:10 wheat screenings: 1 pound of screenings for each 10 pounds of high protein feed. We always make sure we have plenty of extra feed on hand, since it's not uncommon for us to be snowbound.

We have already ordered 12 bales of 3<sup>rd</sup> cutting alfalfa. We (and no doubt the birds) prefer the 3<sup>rd</sup> cutting, as there are not as many stalks. Last year the birds ate 8 bales, but this year we'll have more birds and they are older. We can't get quality alfalfa late in the year, so it's best to get more than enough now.

Our Guinea fowl will eat suet, so we order the kind they have learned to eat and make sure there is always a block or two available. Ours prefer the peanut butter flavored suet with seeds. We'll be getting 8 blocks of that in October.

**Water**

Surprisingly, the Guinea fowl drank a lot of water last winter. Unfortunately, we have not figured out a way to stop their water from freezing during the coldest periods in a way that is safe with our setup. So for winter, we purchased a second \*waterer. We only provide the birds with one waterer at a time, but the second waterer makes it much easier to switch them out during the coldest times.

\*TIP Keep the rubber gaskets on your waterers well lubricated with Vaseline to make removing tops easier – even when they ice up.

**Heat**

Inside the coop we provide 2 heat lamps: 250 watts each. We tried using ceramic heaters, but that wasn't getting the job done. To ensure that we never have any downtime, we stock 6 heat lamp bulbs as replacements.

Outside the coop, we stack bales of straw up against the coop to act as insulation and wind breaks. At winter's end, we use the straw in the garden and around other plants.

Guinea fowl will come outside the coop in some pretty cold weather, but they clearly have their limitations. The birds will not come out once the temperature reaches -10°F. or the winds exceed 30 MPH. We much prefer to put their daily alfalfa outside of the coop in the coop yard, but when we know they won't be coming out, we know to place it inside the coop and distribute it into several piles, to prevent bullying or arguments.



Hmm, nothing like "snow"bathing !!!

*"Many Guinea fowl keepers are fortunate enough to live in climes that make it unnecessary to make winter preparations for the birds. But for those of us who live in the colder zones, it's both required and rewarding. Come spring, when the coop yard is opened and free ranging begins, we get warm-fuzzy feelings seeing that all of our Guinea fowl have not only survived, but thrived – despite winter's unremitting assaults."*

To celebrate New Year's Eve 2009, we served extra alfalfa to the Guinea fowl. We put their winter vegetables both inside the coop and outdoors. Despite frigid temperatures and blustery winds, a few brave souls made their way briefly outside to enjoy the treat.



## Caleigh's Story

Hi, I'm Caleigh Anderson and I love guineas! I am twelve years old and live on an 80 acre farm in western Pennsylvania.

I decided to get guineas because they are good for eating ticks and we had a tick problem with our horses. I found out about guineas from my grandma that had them years ago on her farm.

I talked my mom into getting six of them. We ordered them from a local feed store and waited, and waited, and waited until finally we got them in June.

We got two lavender, two pearl gray, and two white. I named one of the white ones Pearl and began to spend time with her. She soon became very friendly and would let me pick her up and play with her.

When they were able to fly, we moved them down to the big cage by my barn. I wished them good luck for the night and left. The next day I went down to the cage and just stared.

What I saw made me speechless. I saw blood and feathers everywhere! I quickly counted my birds 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. *Wait, I thought no, I know we had six.* I counted again and still got five. I was missing a lavender one. I started crying and yelling. My parents came running down to the cage and immediately realized what had happened.

I pulled open the door and picked up Pearl. She was blood stained. Her belly was completely cut open and bleeding. I took her up to the house and me and my sister, Constance, cleaned the wound and covered it with antibiotic cream and put her under a heat lamp. When my sister examined her more closely she saw Pearl also had a broken wing. I never thought she would fly again. We got a replacement lavender keet to keep her company during her recovery.

We moved them back to the main cage as soon as Pearl was healed and could fly. I thought all my guinea



Me with my "Pearl"

trauma was over, but it wasn't. Once the guineas were grown, I let them out during the day and put them back in at night. One day in May, me and my dad couldn't get one of the guineas to go into the cage and we ended up losing her to a raccoon. I was beside myself, but pulled it together for school that morning. But this summer they have all learned to go into their cage at night!

This summer my guineas started laying eggs! I was very excited to collect them and use them in my cooking and to incubate some of them. It seemed that as soon as I found a nest they would stop laying there and would make a new one!

I just recently hatched two baby keets. One is Pearl's keet named Pickle and one is Kevin's keet named Chirp. I raised them in my room and on my screened in porch in the house until they were old enough to go outside with the adults. They are very friendly and lovable and like to perch on me and follow me around.

So, now I have seven guineas and a whole flock of people who want to buy guinea keets and eggs from me. That's pretty much my whole guinea saga and my advice to anybody that gets guineas and has problems is to keep on going - It will eventually get better.

Have fun and happy buck-wheating!







## The Guinea Tribune

Well, it's been a long summer here at the paper. There have been tales of babies without mamas, mamas without babies and teenagers carrying on like – well, like teenagers!

As you may remember, the Spring foretold of a wild and busy Summer. On that small farm in Texas there was all kind of building going on, as I'm sure there was all over, as people tried to expand facilities for all the new babies that were hatching! It was a sight to see, all those small keets running around behind their mamas, trying to keep up and not get left behind. The world outside is a scary place for the little ones, and it can be a dangerous one as well. The world is not always as safe as we'd like, and no matter how many barriers we put up between danger and our guineas, there is always one or two that just seem determined to "walk on the wild side."

You may wonder what would cause young guineas (and old, too) to venture out too far away from their families, a little too far out in the pasture, just a little further every-day. There are so many dangers like tractors, mowers, strange cats, wandering dogs, hawks, owls, and then of course, the worst offender of all – *the road*.

Some of you may have experienced the "different" guinea in your own flock, or you may have read the stories of others on the GFIA forum. For some reason, there is the occasional guinea that just cannot bypass the opportunity to dart into the middle of the road and challenge oncoming traffic. This guinea is not always the "black sheep" of the otherwise normal, free-ranging flock; in fact, this guinea may be the low guinea in the pecking order. He (or she) may be trying to earn respect from the others, chasing a bug without looking first, or just cannot pass up the siren song that is the road. But, for whatever reason they may have, short of keeping that guinea locked up day and night, there is just not much to be done.

There were stories over the summer about losses of one kind or another, but there were so many more joyous ones of new babies and first-time hatchers! There were so many keets handed over to new families this past Spring and Summer and getting all settled in to their new homes and routines. It makes us smile just to think about all those sweet babies running around.

This is a time of reflection and preparation for the Fall and Winter that are upon us. It is also a good time to thank those dedicated folks in the GFIA that put out their hands, trucks and coops to some flock owners that, for one reason or another fell on hard times and needed to re-home their flock. Or helped a few "lost" guineas find a home.

Yep, it's been a wild Summer and I, for one, have enjoyed my guineas and come to love and appreciate them even more since "helping" a few of them into their new world!



So, how many of you dressed up like guineas for Halloween? Come on, fess up!

Ok, how 'bout dressing your guineas up to look like you? the kids? grandma?

**GFIA memberships** expire at the end of each calendar year. If you joined anytime after Sept. 1, 2010, your membership will still be valid for 2011. If you have not joined or renewed since then, now is the time! Benefits include a Welcome Packet, educational materials, thrice-yearly newsletters, and an annual educational conference. In addition, you'll be supporting our work to expand the information available about guinea-keeping. Already, two studies are underway involving guinea fowl (one on free-choice feeding and one parasite control) which were started because of GFIA.

Our mission:

- Supporting the responsible keeping and breeding of guinea fowl;
- Educating on the care and habits of guinea fowl;
- Assisting those interested in incubating, hatching, and keeping Guinea fowl

2011 Membership Rates (prices in US dollars):

- Single Membership \$20.00
- Family Membership \$28.00
- Junior membership \$ 5.00

To join or find out more about membership:

Join online using Paypal at  
[www.guineafowlinternational.org](http://www.guineafowlinternational.org);  
call (979) 773-9100

When you join, please include your name, address, phone number(s) and email address. We'd also like to know whether and how you want to be listed in our membership directory, how many and what color guinea fowl you own, and any special areas of interest.

Also, please consider contributing to our newsletter or serving on a committee. Email [president@guineafowlinternational.org](mailto:president@guineafowlinternational.org) or call (979) 773-9100.

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