

How quickly time flies I have been back at work a fortnight already after nine weeks leave. I don't know where the time went. In recent years I've taken my annual leave in winter, as well as taking advantage of a system we have where we can purchase extra leave, which means that I basically hibernate during the winter and that makes it easier running an animal sanctuary during the time of year when days are shorter.

At the start of my leave I made a list of things I wanted to achieve during my time off — it was ambitious and admittedly not a lot of it was crossed off — so did I fail? It was a question I pondered on and off during the past weeks. The conclusion I came to is no I don't think I did fail. Someone once said plans are made to be changed and they certainly did as there were unexpected things which popped up and of course weather also played a part.

So what did I get up to? Well in addition to the daily jobs which need to be done I built an extension to the section of the sanctuary known as Roosterville (see pic at end of this update), and planned the final stage of it, which will hopefully be completed during the next few months. The work included moving and realigning three fences, planting new trees (always a good feeling), reconstructing a donation shed and relocating two rooster flocks. I also did some maintenance work on a number of existing night sheds; reorganised the tool shed so I can find things when I need them; set up some shade sails in anticipation of warmer weather; and helped save a few dozen more lives by offering them refuge at A Poultry Place.

There were some frustrating episodes with people wanting my help with rehoming animals who actually turned out to be nothing more than time wasters and despite their claims to the contrary weren't really that interested in making sure their animals were safe. Unfortunately it's a behaviour I've come to know all too well.

There was also heartbreak. A young woman from Sydney contacted me saying she had a neighbour with a chicken and a rooster and had found out that they were planning to kill them within the week; she wanted to know if she asked to rehome them could I take them in. When she called me back I could hear her holding back the tears — the neighbour had refused her offer. I tried to comfort her and encouraged her to keep fighting the good fight for the animals despite this setback.

On a brighter note I helped a woman interstate with a school hatching project issue offering advice for her upcoming meeting with the principal of the school her kids attend. The outcome was the principal would reconsider the program. Another success was getting a woman who surrendered three roosters to agree to never again put fertile eggs under her broody hens.

Introducing new faces is always a nice experience and especially so when I'm about twenty-four seven to follow their every experience. One overcast Saturday morning Calico arrived (pic below left). Cal had been left behind when his sisters were rehomed with other people due to his humans moving house. No one wanted Cal cause he is a rooster, who like his brothers crows and doesn't lay eggs — so in the eyes of many is 'useless'. Cal is a gently giant, who loves being picked up and cuddled, so somewhere in his past he must have been a much loved companion. He is slowly making friends with some of the other boys here and can now relax and enjoy the rest of his life.

Tiny tot Tiberius was the result of a hatching project and spent a few weeks getting acquainted with his new brothers (who are a few weeks older and the result of another hatching project) behind

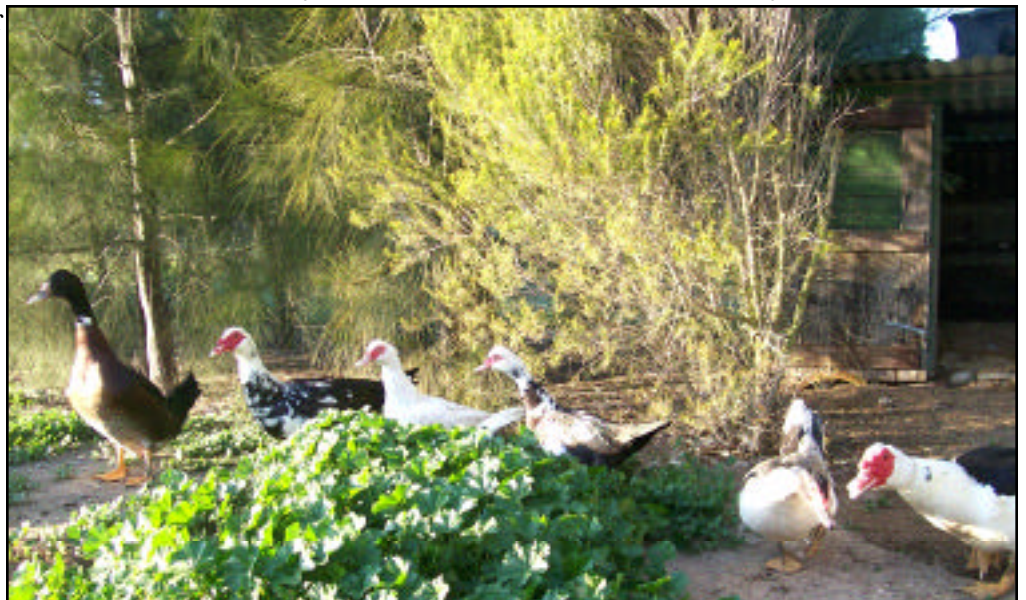
the safety of a child's playpen before he chose one sunny weekend to fly over the playpen (pic below right) and formally introduce himself, it all went well and that night he roosted with his new mates in their night shed.



Marvin the duck arrived at A Poultry Place a week after having been found wandering a suburban Sydney street with an injured neck — something had been tied around it. Luckily he was found by a caring couple who took him the Sydney University Vet to get fixed up before passing him onto a wildlife carer who looked after him for a few days and then delivered him down here. When the woman who saved him saw a photo of him she said: “Marvin must feel like he is in Duck Heaven. I can't tell you how happy we feel to see his photo, know that he is okay and also where he has ended up. He is one lucky duck.” Marvin has settled into life in the duck paddock and has a new best buddy — a young black muscovy drake who took a keen interest from the start. The reason became apparently a few weeks later when Marvin laid an egg, and has now subsequently been renamed Martha.

My break ended as spring began and it was a glorious early spring morning when I introduced a new duck family (pic below) to their new life. They had been surrendered separately over a number

of weeks to an animal shelter and were most likely all 'impulse buys' by people seeing cute ducklings and then not wanting them after their 'cuteness' began to fade and they began to grow up. The leader of the family is Laurence (far right in pic), a big black Muscovy drake, who is actually a big teddy bear on the inside, who is often preening himself in the sun after a long bath. When he was at the shelter



he met Vivienne and hasn't left her side since. Viv is a little sweetie who doesn't mind a cuddle. The others aren't as friendly towards me but all get on well and are usually quite good at going to bed of a night.

As always it is currently a glorious time of the year here as winter has faded and spring has sprung — across the property hundreds of wattle trees have burst into flower and the buds which appeared on the fruit trees recently are beginning to flower; ducks and geese are going broody everywhere making the evening rounds that much more challenging as I have to find where they are hiding to make sure they go into the safety of their night shelters; the sheep are beginning to look shaggy as they approach their annual October appointment with the hairdresser and many of the visiting wild birds such as the rosellas and wattlebirds have returned. But this year there is an underlining concern in the air as rainfall so far has been way below average and I fear the summer which lies ahead because it's been a while since we've had such a lack of rain leading up to summer. Though the 53 mm (just over two inches) which has fallen in the past 36 hours is very helpful. ●

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