

STATUS REPORT 5 – AZAGRA FARM – GOATS, CONT'D & NEW REST HOUSE

During our four month absence from the farm, the male animals did have their field days, but not without some tragedy. Of the 16 female goats we had, five died during the unusually wet weather, despite the goat house's protection and our agri-vet consultants's intervention and medication. But the lone male Anglo-Boer buck did its thing: it impregnated all the remaining goats (who knows, perhaps that's why five died). Four of the cows are also pregnant, but from artificial insemination. The chickens are harder to keep track off, but the roosters were quite busy with the females, although a few also got sick and died.



The “Harem king” is shown above on left, corralled with other goats in one of the goat house sections.



But the two kids born to one of the first goats who give birth didn't survive long.

So with soon-to-lactate cows and goats, where would we keep the extra milk that we might extract? We therefore proceeded with the next planned project: a rest house that would have a small kitchen with refrigerator. After all, we already brought over a used milk pasteurizer bought on eBay. Besides, what better place to relax when on the farm.

Photo on right shows the 24 ft x 30 ft footprint staked out. On the left is a coconut stump. It took 15 felled coconut trees to produce the coco lumber shown in photo below. Note the line of stumps and the sawdust in the foreground. The sand and gravel mounds are for the concrete footings. One shouldn't build near a coconut tree as the fruit do fall and cause damage.

That's 1,915 board-feet of lumber cut to various sizes by a contractor who comes with a portable saw mill and cuts the trees down and into lumber. It costs P5 (about 10 cents) per board-foot (bd-ft) for this service. Buying the wood from a lumber yard is P14 per bd-ft, plus transportation. I haven't worked out a comparison with US pine wood, but coco lumber seems much cheaper. Coco wood is surprisingly hard, yet the soft center at the top is edible and makes good salad. Note lone goat on top of wood pile.

Right photo: no harm in putting a few coins into the footing base. It may please the earth spirits and bring good luck.



Further right photo: a footing after pouring the concrete; note steel strap for fixing the post.





Day 4 of work by the master carpenter and his 2 helpers; posts are up, floor joists partly complete. They are on daily wage, not closed contract work.



Day 6 of work. I find the local term for the roof A-frame, visual: "sala-gunting", meaning scissors.

The rest house will be a number of notches higher in construction standard than the goat house (shown on the right photo), with such improvements as coco lumber posts instead of bamboo, concrete footings, plywood flooring instead of bamboo slats, bamboo walls, power, running water and toilet. Something like the beach house, but none of the fancy water systems.



In the meantime, the special grass we planted is lush. Photo on left shows bamboo posts that will be soon strung with hogwire to demarcate more grazing sections. Note different grass on right. Then the goats will be allowed to range more freely in their designated areas to feed. At the moment, they are limited by the rope around their necks with one end staked to the ground, or what is harvested and fed to them in the goat house trough, as shown in the first photo above.

Back in the chicken house, it was production, full speed ahead, as shown on the three photos below.



More eggs.



More growing chicks.



And finally, finally, I caught a rooster and hen in the procreation act. As I said before, it takes just a few seconds. I was propped on the hammock, but my telephoto lens did some justice.



The past weeks turn of events called for a celebration. So here I am with a jug of coconut wine to drink to the occasion.

Danny Gil, 4 Dec 08