



A Year of Firsts

Semilla Besada Companions

Inside this issue:

<i>Semilla Besada Companions</i>	1
<i>An innovative solution</i>	1
<i>Launching The Lodge</i>	2
<i>Hanging on for dear life</i>	2
<i>Sharing the Matanza</i>	2
<i>Restoring perennial grassland</i>	3
<i>City Folks programme</i>	3
<i>As nature intended</i>	3
<i>Asking the right questions</i>	4

Special points of interest:

- Using tyres rammed with earth to create an innovative solution
- Andalucian Blue as a good all-round utility bird
- The vanishing local tradition of the *Matanza*

This year we decided to launch a seasonal Newsletter under the title of *Semilla Besada Companions*.

Over the seven years we have been developing the research farm, we have had the companionship of many people.

This Newsletter has been created with them in mind: to show them how the work they have contributed

to has developed.

For those of you who are new to our work, we hope this Newsletter will encourage you to become companions in the flesh and help us shape the future!

Details of what we offer can be found at
www.holisticdecisions.com



An innovative solution



Using old tyres rammed with earth, many hands have created a stabilizing wall for a reservoir that required constant repair because of subsidence.

Six years, 1400 tyres and 2000 hours later the reservoir is now full of water. This will provide half a million litres of

water to support farm animals, plants and trees during the summer drought.

As a testament to the hard work of many, the completed tyres were painted with the names of all those who contributed.

After the experience of spending an hour packing a single tyre with dirt using a sledge hammer, one volunteer ventured this question about the names on the tyres "Is that where the volunteers are

buried?"!

Please contact us if you would like to read the full article which highlights the process behind our decision.



Launching The Lodge



Although we wanted to offer walkers the opportunity to explore this unique landscape, we did not want to contribute to the environmental degradation attendant to tourism.

As a result The Lodge has placed the environment top of the agenda. The materials used, the services offered and the numbers catered for have all been determined with sus-

tainability in mind.

Guests are given a complimentary selection of organic produce on their arrival and the opportunity to have a farm tour during their stay.

Information is given on the website about travel, sightseeing, walking opportunities and well as how guests

can soften their environmental impact www.holisticdecisions.com/thelodge



Hanging on for dear life

This year brought our first experience of lambing when Mabel gave birth to twins.

Our lack of experience showed when we discovered nine days later that all was not well with one of the lambs. Her mother had rejected her. In fact we expected her to die before evening.

When we found her still alive we decided to intervene and spent the next nine days bottle feeding her on a 24 hour basis.

When she still failed to thrive and was in obvious pain, we decided to put an end to her life.

Her tenacity had prompted us to give her the name of Limpet.



When we carried out a post mortem we found that her heart was flaccid. We wondered whether this had prevented her from sucking strongly from birth.

We learnt that the mother recognises her lamb by the scent of her own milk as it passes through the lamb's system. If this does not happen then she will reject it.

Detailed information about our rearing and management of sheep will be part of the future website Library.

"Her tenacity had prompted us to give her the name of Limpet"

Sharing the Matanza



Trying our hand at sausage-making at home

This Spring found us up to our elbows in pork meat, as we joined Paco, our neighbour and his family, in the traditional annual slaughter of the pig ... the *Matanza*.

At the end of two days hard work, the upstairs store was filled with drying sausages.

Marie, Paco's wife, and Rosario, her sister, added wine, seasoning, herbs and spices to huge pots of minced pork, according to the various favourite recipes.

We shared a lunch of the pig's 'pluck' (the offal) and went home with a selection of sausages for our own larder, to-

gether with our notebooks filled with recipes and tips.

Information on vanishing rural traditions will be part of our future website Library.

Restoring perennial grassland



showing how ranchers and farmers are restoring the environment with the very animals that have attracted so much bad press.

The belief that grazing animals cause environmental damage is now a myth! It is the way they are managed that causes land degradation.

Books such as *Gardeners of Eden* by Dan Dagget are brimful with inspiring photos

With the insights gained from Holistic Management, we have been using ‘animal impact’ in order to start the regeneration of perennial grasses.

This has involved containing

a large concentration of animals for a short period of time in order to allow beneficial impact on the soil

The establishment of perennial grassland is the most suitable way to prevent soil erosion and land degradation in this area.

Details of our land restoration work will appear in the future website Library.



City Folks programme

Although Holistic Management was pioneered amongst ranchers and farmers, it has universal application.

With this in mind, the City Folks programme was created to enable those living in urban environments to create real quality of life, whilst safeguarding the natural resources upon which that life depends.



The first graduate of the programme had this to say: “I was impulsive, reactionary and idealistic. Although I am still

all those things I now have a structure around my ideals to ground them; I have tools to plan and be more proactive, manage my impulses and be aware of the fall-out they create. I feel empowered and enlightened. It’s like the street lights were turned on along the road I wanted to take.”

“I feel empowered and enlightened”

**Rachel Waking,
First graduate of the
City Folks Programme**

Please contact us for programme details at aspen@holisticdecisions.com

As nature intended

It’s surprising how much we take natural processes for granted! It has taken us five years to find a good all-round utility bird that will raise its own young.

With the advent of artificial incubation and ‘show’ birds, the need for the mothering instinct has almost been bred

out of hens.

Specialisation has also led to the loss of birds that will produce a reasonable quantity of eggs as well as provide meat for the table.

Luckily a local breed, the Andalusian Blue, has proved to us that it is still possible to rear chickens as nature in-

tended with two hens raising eight chicks this year.

Detailed information on our rearing and management will be part of our future website Library.



Semilla Besada Companions *shaping the future*

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www.holisticdecisions.com/semillabesada

News Flash

All that we learn at Semilla Besada is going to be made available under subject heading by the end of 2006 in a website Library. Membership details for the Library will be sent to all Newsletter subscribers.

Semilla Besada is a 16 hectare research farm set in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains in southern Spain. The

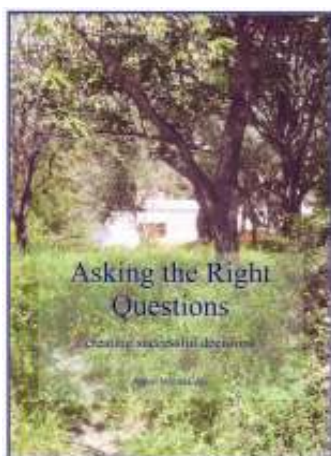


focus of the farm is the improvement of this ecosystem's capacity to cycle water and nutrients, support complex and stable biodiversity and provide year-round cover for bare soil. Attendant to this is the development of sustainable land and livelihood practices for small-scale farmers.

Every decision we make is :

- *Tested for environmental, social and environmental sustainability.*
- *Assumed to be wrong.*
- *Carefully monitored to ensure that we can take remedial action as soon as we detect a deviation from long-term sustainability.*

Asking the Right Questions



to purchase visit
www.holisticdecisions.com/hd_rq_booklet.html

We recently had a man stay with us who had just placed a deposit on a rural property.

After a week with us he became convinced that this choice was not going to serve him well. He phoned his partner and together they decided to pull out of the purchase of the property. They lost their €10,000 deposit.

This area of Spain has become a favourite destination for those in search of a simpler lifestyle in the sun.

However, many of those who make this move are unable to realise their dream.

We realised that people's success hinged on not so much on finding answers to questions, as asking the right questions in the first place!

So we created a booklet entitled just that ... Asking the Right Questions!

In it are the pivotal questions to be asked, together with real-life local examples. In the glossary and appendix there are lists of reading material as well as the various seminars and services provided at Semilla Besada to help

future land owners to bring their project to a successful conclusion and create the quality of life that they want.

For more information see

www.holisticdecisions.com

