



# A Time of Contrast

## *Summertime .....*

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Summer is particularly a time of contrast.

The activity of Spring tails off as plants go to seed and perennial grasses become dormant. The landscape turns from vibrant green to biscuit brown.

Alongside this is a busy fruit harvest starting with cherries, then mov-

ing on to plums and pears.

As temperatures rise the weather becomes perfect for drying produce. This is our favoured method of preservation as it involves no added ingredients and no non-renewable fuel use.



*Details of produce preservation methods will be part of the website Library.*

## *The Lodge*



The launch of The Lodge began well with a family from New Zealand booking a holiday within a fortnight of the site going live.

Martin, Judith, Jacqueline and

David hail from North Island, and were most appreciative of the landscape. This was despite seeing the aftermath of the bushfire that burnt our 2,500 hectares of the Sierra Nevada Natural Park last year.

David was particularly interested in getting his own chickens on his return home and was studying the various coop and run designs at Semilla Besada.

*Information on the relationship between bushfires and sustainable land management will be in the future website Library.*

“This place is really cool. I would love it if I could stay one more week. You’ve got really cool games like Civilization. The puppies are really great with their nice soft coats. Thank you for the chicken book. There were heaps of varieties. The chicken I liked best was the Barnevelder.”

(David Louw)

### Special points of interest:

- The politics of water: local needs give way to multi-national's bottom line.
- Hand-shearing local Andalusian sheep
- Bushfires and their link to loss of grazing animals

## *The Olive Press interview*



Jason Happenstall of the local English language newspaper The Olive Press, spent a day at Semilla Besada to gather material for a feature article on our work here.

A newcomer to the area himself, he was interested in the insights of Holistic Management in terms of the implications of the Savory Brittleness Scale for all those who man-

age land in the Mediterranean.

As it was mid-summer, there was plenty of opportunity to show Jason the consequences of leaving land 'to nature'.

By the end of the day Jason had commissioned one of our environmental surveys for his own property.

To read the complete article copy and paste the following link .

[http://www.holisticdecisions.com/media\\_articles.html](http://www.holisticdecisions.com/media_articles.html)



## *Bushfire zone*

Last year two northern European walkers started a fire which burnt out 200-year-old trees, land and livelihoods to within three kilometres of Semilla Besada.

We have witnessed bushfires every year of the seven that we have lived in this area of southern Spain.

With late Spring rains there has been considerable re-growth. Even the burned Chestnut trees re-sprouted at the base.

However, alongside this has also been a flush of grass. At one time this would have been grazed by the animals of the various subsistence farmers of the area. Now it stands as food for fire not animals.

In response to the growing risk to rural residents Semilla Besada is producing a book entitled *Bushfires ... how to protect your land and home*. This

will be available from the on-line bookshop at the beginning of next year. To be informed of its' release please copy and paste this link: [http://www.holisticdecisions.com/bs\\_bush\\_inf.html](http://www.holisticdecisions.com/bs_bush_inf.html)



**The flush of grass now stands as food for fire not animals**

## *A mother of three*

Bonita, our Pointer-Spanish Mastiff cross, gave birth to three puppies.

We have made a decision not to have her sterilised and simply keep her in a secure area while she is on heat. However, this year our persistent one-year old dog

broke in!

This area of Spain is known for its stray dogs, which can become a hazard to the goat herds. In addition most of those on the coast will have Leishmaniosis, a blood parasite carried by the

sand fly that can affect humans as well.



## *The politics of water*



Since the 11th century subsistence farmers have relied on irrigation water channelled from the river to the various farms.

At Semilla Besada we still use the same irrigation channel,

known as the *Acequia Encinillas*, that was dug out of the mountain rock face by the Moors, the north African invaders of southern Spain.

However, the French multi-national Danône, pumps two million litres of water a day from the mountainside to supply its water-bottling plant *Agua Lanjarón*.

This arrangement represents a doubling of the previous

year's requirement and was negotiated with the Mayor, despite much protest from the local environmental group.

Local farmers are beginning to see the consequence of such an arrangement as water becomes increasingly scarce at a time when it is most needed.

Danône when challenged, said that they would close the plant, with the attendant loss of 300 jobs, if they were not awarded this increase in supply.



## *Hand-shearing sheep*



This was David's first experience of shearing sheep. Having spent a day watching Chris Stewart, author of *Driving Over*

*Lemons*, shearing his sheep using electrical equipment, David set about putting that knowledge to work.

He felt more confident using a pair of hand shears and sheared our four

adult ewes.

With the help of Sebastian, the French volunteer who has

worked at Semilla Besada for five months, David sheared while Sebastian held the ewe steady.

David was not impressed with the neatness of his work but was pleased that he had not cut any of the sheep.

Sebastian commented "It's the nearest I have come to wrestling!"

**"It's the nearest I have come to wrestling!"**

**Sebastian, French volunteer at Semilla Besada**

*Details of our sheep management, including holistic grazing will be part of the website Library*

## *And then there were two ...*

After a month and a half of meticulous rearing the Andalusian Blue pullets were let out for the first time to free-range with the main flock.

By evening all but two, a cock and a hen, had been eaten by the puppies! Although showing no interest when taken on a lead to the chickens, we feel

reluctant to trust them as a pack and so lock them into a safe enclosure when the chickens are let out to free-range at midday.

The survivors are thriving and were the only two 'blues' from the original clutches, the remaining being either white or black. The colour blue

does not necessarily breed true and it requires a certain amount of management to maintain that colouring.

*Detailed information on the blue gene will be in the future website Library.*



## Semilla Besada Companions *shaping the future*

Aspen , David and Samuel Edge  
Apto. de Correos 19  
18420 Lanjarón  
Granada  
Spain

Phone: (0034) 958 347 053  
Fax: (0034) 958 347 117  
E-mail: [semillabesada@holisticdecisions.com](mailto:semillabesada@holisticdecisions.com)

### We're on the Web!

[www.holisticdecisions.com/semillabesada](http://www.holisticdecisions.com/semillabesada)

#### News Flash

Pay Pal secure payment system has now been installed on the website so we can accept credit cards. You do not have to have an account with Pay Pal in order to use this system.

*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 economic 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.*

## *The warrenry*



When the Romans invaded Great Britain, they brought with them the practice of managing rabbit warrens. Clues to the locations of such warrens appear in a variety of place names, such as Dawlish Warren in the west country. An area of land would be walled and rabbits introduced. A 'warrener' managed the population and supplied the landlord with good table meat.

*Detailed information on the management of the warren, including comparisons with conventional practices, will be part of the future website Library.*

We decided to experiment with this process at Semilla Besada. A wired enclosure was built, which included a wire 'floor' buried about 30cms deep, to prevent the

rabbits from digging out.

In one corner a large mound of earth was created. Two concrete pipes were buried at the base to provide an entry point for the rabbits.

We began with two separate breeding groups of three New Zealand Whites, both of which were donated by neighbours.

These were eventually amalgamated and they set up house in the warren. Soon the concrete pipes were obsolete as the

warren became peppered with burrows.

A brown male was introduced to add some colour for identification and management purposes. However, the alpha male had other ideas and to date there have been no brown rabbits.

