

SNAKE RIVER FARM

January 2011 Newsletter and Order Solicitation

BISON, CATTLE and damn fine HORSES

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Dear Friends and Customers

I am writing this letter on the first days of January.

The 2010 harvest wrapped up in early December just about as planned.

In this letter, I will update you on plans for 2011 and ask you to **place your 2011 orders now**.

Last year as you know, the **beef animals and hogs** were all spoken for by summer. We had to turn new customers and a few old customers away. Many of those folks who could not order in 2010, asked to be on this mailing list so they can order for 2011. We will increase our beef and hog numbers by about ten each for 2011. That increase should provide enough animals for everyone who receives this January newsletter. In 2011, we plan to grow and harvest 35 beef animals and 50 hogs. This may be close to the maximum I can raise.

Those of you who purchase **bison** meat are probably aware that a rapid increase in demand has caused bison prices to increase sharply. I sent an emessage to most of our bison customers in late 2010 to seek your input on what we should do to meet demand in 2011. The reason for contacting you was that I needed to buy replacement young animals. The price for such animals has doubled in the past year. That means my price to you in 2011 will need to increase significantly also. Most of you responded that you would stick with bison even at a higher price. Others wrote that you would switch to our grass-fed beef if bison becomes too high. In 2010, we harvested 18 bison. In 2011, we can harvest up to 15 bison. I am assuming some drop in numbers because of the higher price.

I have held the bison price as low as possible at \$4.50 per pound hanging weight. I realize this is a high price for you to pay but in fact are margins on bison are thin. I am concerned that if I increase the price too much we will lose too many of you as customers. I do not want that to happen. I am assuming that prices will come down but that may not be for a few years. Beef and hogs are profitable for us so things should work out ok overall.

Farm Visits

Our Spring Customer Day is **Saturday May 21, 2011** from noon until sundown. Bring your family and friends. The Fall Customer Day is **Saturday September 24**, from noon to sundown.

We will have horses hitched for wagon and cart rides. You, your family and friends are invited. All events are informal and relaxed. No selling. Just a nice day in the country. You do not need to be a customer to attend.

All events are "rain or shine". We do not change our plans because of the weather, just our clothes.

Of course, you are welcome to bring your families and friends to see the animals and visit the farm anytime we are home.

We also have some special winter days for bobsledding, lard rendering etc. If I have your email address I will send notices to you for those events as they come up. We have also set up a Face Book page "Snake River Farm Minnesota" and will list events there.

2011 Harvest Plans and Your Order.

As in other years, will begin harvesting beef in late September. Most will be harvested in October and the remainder in early December.

Bison will be about the same timing as beef. In past years we have harvested a few bison throughout the year to meet demand. Because most of our bison intended for harvest are relatively younger as we start this year, we will only harvest a few before October. Most of the young bison will need to grow into the fall.

We do not harvest anything in the first half of November because the butcher shop is filled with deer.

Hogs are all harvested in late November.

There is normally a seven to ten day period between harvesting and the time your meat is ready for pick-up. That will be longer of course, if you have Quality process your meat into smoked hams or sausages etc.

Special Requests for Timing and Size.

Some of you have asked for your bison or beef earlier or later in the fall. Some of you who order ½ each year would like ¼ early (September) and the 2nd ¼ late (December). Some of you want ¼ from a smaller or larger animal. I am happy to accommodate such requests but you need to let me know of your preferences. Otherwise I simply fill orders in the sequence that the orders were placed.

Beef

The beef we will harvest are all meat type heifers selected to grow and finish well on grass.

Bison

The bison harvested in fall 2011 will be heifers. Some of them were born and raised here but many of them are animals that we purchased as grass-fed yearlings. All our animals are of course, medication free.

The following applies to both Beef and Bison.

All quarters are similar. The butcher shop mixes fronts and backs to give everyone a variety of cuts.

You tell Quality Meats how to cut and package your meat.

You should pay us for the hanging weight before you pick up your meat.

You pay Quality Meats for the processing when you pick up your meat. About 60 cents per pound.

The folks at the butcher shop are very easy to get along with. Ask for Beth or Nancy.

If you are a new customer I tell them so and they will be particularly helpful.

Hogs. Our hogs in 2010 were big. Just about the size I have been trying to reach. Even though they were big, they were remarkably lean and muscular. I hope to be able to raise them as well every year. The hogs are in pastures where they can eat green plants, roots and worms. In addition we grind and mix a unique blend of grains and other natural ingredients for them to eat. All local ingredients. I am reading more and more articles about the improved tastes and texture of the meat from hogs that are allowed to grow slower and larger on pasture. We started them off as baby pigs in late April. By harvest time in November, the hogs reached a live weight of 400 pounds or more. The hanging weights were between 150 and 190 pounds per half.

Because they are outside and get a lot of exercise, the hogs grow strong and stay lean.

Because they get a varied and natural diet their meat is exceptionally tasty and high in good nutrients.

You should place your 2011 order now. No deposit required. You can cancel your order if things change.

Hanging weight price for **bison is \$4.50** per pound, **beef is \$2.50** per pound and **pork is \$2.00** per pound.

You can cancel or decrease your order anytime if your situation changes. No explanation is needed.

These are hard economic times for many of us. Last year a few families cancelled or reduced their orders. That was not a problem for us because we sell out anyway. I just moved the next person up on the schedule. If you do need to cancel, it is much easier for me if you do so before your animal is harvested. If you simply inform us that you have changed your mind I can just move to someone else on the schedule. If you wait until I have harvested and sent an invoice to you, it gets a lot messier for me.

If you visited us in 2010, you probably met my daughter Sarah, our son-in-law Jordan and grandson Saul.

They have moved from New Hampshire to build a house and farm near us. They are building on 80 acres two miles from here. We are delighted to have them back in Minnesota. They will be helping us at future events.

Sarah is a banker, Jordan is a paramedic and Saul is a wonderful four-year-old farm boy.

If you are not on our email list, please send me your email address if you have one. That way I can keep you informed of special events and offers. I will not abuse it and I do not share your information with others.

Email works best for me. tbarthel@clarus-medical.com

Or, if you prefer, call us at 763 263 2721 and leave a message. We are not in the house much.

Best regards and thank you. Tom Barthel