

August Update August 17 2012

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**From:** Tom Barthel  
**Sent:** Friday, August 17, 2012 10:27 AM  
**To:** Tom Barthel <tbarthel@clarus-medical.com>  
**Subject:** August Update

### **Dear Friends, Neighbors and Customers**

In this message I will cover several topics.

- A. I will update you on things happening at the farm. All good.
- B. There will be a few grass-fed lambs available by the ½.
- C. I will explain the order confirmation process which I intend to complete in the next two weeks.
- D. For those of you who are new customers I will provide some details of the fall harvesting schedule and process.
- E. I will write about pasture management with our Minnesota #4 mower. Photos will soon be on Facebook at "Snake River Farm Minnesota".
- F. A reminder that the Fall Farm Day is Saturday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>.

In past years I have sent this August update by post and paper.

It is now my intention to send virtually all communications via email.

The majority of you have expressed a preference for email.

Some of you do prefer paper. To those in that group, I apologize.

If it is a requirement for you I will send messages to you by post.

Unfortunately, I must rely pretty heavily on email.

The reason is simple. There are well over 200 families now on the Snake River Farm's customer list.

The cost of sending a postal mailing is high but the determining factor is that it simply takes too much of my time.

It literally takes days to copy, fold, address and stuff that many letters.

I know you would rather have me spend my time caring for your animals.

Nevertheless, if for any reason you need communications in paper, let me know. I do not want to lose even one customer because of email.

### **The update.**

It has been an excellent summer for growing. That includes grass, gardens, flowers, beef, bison and hogs.

I personally prefer cooler weather but there is no denying that heat, sun and water make things grow.

We are grateful that we have been spared the dry weather that has hurt so many farmers to the south.

We have enough fine animals in the pastures to fill all current orders and possibly a few more.

About size.

We try to provide as natural a life as possible for our animals.

When animals are raised in such an environment they are able to make simple choices in their daily lives.

Choices such as how much to eat and how much time to rest. How much time to play, and when to relax.

Because the individual animals actually do make choices like that, they grow at different rates and they grow to different sizes.

What I am getting at is although all the animals are healthy and in top condition a few are larger and a few are smaller.

Most of course are normal or close to the average.

Be sure to let me know if you wish a larger or smaller beef, bison or hog. I should be able to accommodate you.

Otherwise you will get the fine animal that is harvested when your name comes up on my schedule.

About timing.

Harvest for bison and beef starts in late September and ends in early December.

If you have a preference for timing, (early or late) let me know. I can usually accommodate that also.

Hogs are all harvested near the end of November.

### **Grass-fed lambs.**

As many of you know, my daughter Sarah, her husband Jordan and son Saul have an 80 acre farm about two miles north of the Snake River Farm.

They are raising a few lambs this year as a trial. If this all works out OK at their farm, and it seems as it will, they will increase production in future years.

For now, they have a few available for harvest and sale this fall.

Send an emessage to me if you are interested.

### **The order confirmation process.**

In the next weeks, I will email each of you to reaffirm your order including any special requirements. Please watch for that message.

The primary purpose for confirmation is to eliminate errors in my schedule.

A secondary purpose is to remind you of what you do have on order.

Of course, if you prefer you can simply send a message to me right now stating what you believe you have on order.

These communications whether initiated by me or by you will be a good opportunity to answer any questions you may have.

### **Fall harvesting schedule and process.**

The fall bovine (beef and bison) harvest will start Wednesday, September 19<sup>th</sup> and continue each Wednesday thereafter, ending December 5<sup>th</sup>.

Late on those harvest days, Nancy of Quality meats will email the hanging weights of the animals to me. Based on that weight, I will send invoices to each of you scheduled to receive a portion of that day's harvest.

You do not need to do anything in this regard until you hear from me.

When you do hear from me, helpful instructions will be provided.

After you hear from me, you and Nancy need to communicate on processing details.

To facilitate communication I will provide both you and Nancy with contact information, both phone and email.

Of course, you can contact Nancy ahead of time if you wish. She is always remarkably helpful.

Normally, your meat is ready about ten days after harvest.

Hogs are harvested in the last half of November.

The same procedure is followed as for bison and beef.

About 25% of you ask for help with delivery. I am happy to do that, either to your home or to a point of mutual convenience.

We just need to work together to conserve fuel and time.

**Managing pastures with a Minnesota #4 Mower.** Photos on Facebook at "Snake River Farm Minnesota".

By mid-summer, the herds, bison, beef and horses, have normally been rotated through most of the pastures at least once. It is a good management practice to mow the pastures in order to clip off the plants that the animals did not graze completely. Clipping off these weeds or stems helps to encourage regrowth of the desirable grasses and forbs.

I do that clipping which is basically hay mowing, with a Minnesota #4 mower. The #4 is a ground drive, sickle mower. It is at least 80 years old and was designed to be pulled by horses.

The Minnesota brand of farm machinery, which included hay mowers, hay rakes, grain binders, manure spreaders, wagons and more was produced by the inmates at Stillwater State Prison.

The prisoners no longer produce farm machinery. I am told that they make office furniture these days. Until a few years ago, the Minnesota machines were on display at the Minnesota State Fair. You may recall the "Prison Industries" building on the north end of Machinery Hill. I believe it has been remodeled to some other use.

The machines were and are of high quality. Hundreds of thousands were produced and sold by dealers all over Minnesota. Over 6,000 mowers alone were produced in 1919.

Sarah has placed a few photos on our facebook page.

I mowed over 50 acres of pasture this summer without one breakdown.

Because the days were quite hot, I did some of the work using a Farmall model B tractor.

The Farmall B was designed in the 1930 s by the International Harvester Company. My father bought this particular tractor in the early 1950 s. It had been manufactured in the mid 1940 s.

It is a good little tractor and will probably run forever.

The engine produces about 14 horsepower. Less than most riding lawn mowers.

There will be photos of both the tractor and of the horses pulling the mower on Facebook.

The mower was designed to run at the speed of a walking team of horses, so I drive the tractor at that speed.

The mower has a five foot sickle bar and mows at the rate of about one acre per hour.

A team of horses can pull it for 4 to 6 hours.

The old mower does a nice job and is a joy to use even with the tractor.

I prefer the horses however.

When mowing with horses the only sounds I hear are natural and quiet.

The sound of the machine clicking as the sickle moves rapidly from end to end of the cutter bar.

The harness jingling.

The horses hooves thumping as they pull.

All somehow in rhythm.

I hope your summer has been good too.

Best regards.

Tom

**p.s. Fall Farm Day, Saturday September 22<sup>nd</sup>. More details later.**