

Late April Update, Balm and Broth

Dear Customers, Neighbors and Friends

Spring Farm Day is May 18. I will send a more detailed message in a week or so.

I picked up some bunnies last evening.

One hundred little piglets will be here on Monday.

Chicks, ducklings, and little turkeys are due on May 6th.

There are **five bison calves**. You can **see photos of them on our facebook page**. Google "Snake River Farm Minnesota" and click on the address.

This supersized winter has put a lot of strain on wildlife.

We have about 20 wood ducks nests in the trees. The flock returned two weeks ago when spring seemed near.

Wood ducks are comfortable perching on the limbs of trees.

Last week when we got that 13 inch snowfall the eagles were desperately chasing the wood ducks through those trees.

Exciting to watch but clearly the eagles are desperate for food. No doubt they are nesting.

We see small predator birds such as shrikes and kestrels chasing juncos, nuthatches and sparrows through the trees and bushes often.

But large raptors such as eagles, large hawks and owls like to find their prey in the open. The risk of breaking a wing when maneuvering through trees is great.

It was amazing to see the eagles twisting and banking through the oaks with their great wingspan.

Similarly, I am seeing fox and coyotes hunting in the daylight. They have cubs by now and the late end to winter is putting extra pressure on them for food.

Many seasonal birds, blackbirds and robins showed up in recent weeks.

They are poorly suited to surviving long periods of snow cover.

We have been putting out piles of grains and dog food for these early birds.

Do likewise if you can.

Concerning Pigs and Prices.

Yesterday I was able to buy all the pig feed that we should need this year. The price was high but not as high as I feared.

Because of that I am rescinding my notice about a price increase for pork from \$2.10 to \$2.25.

That change was to become effective May 1st.

Instead the price will stay at \$2.10 for all of 2013.

We have sold a bit over 80 hogs so far. That is more than last year. I intend to raise about 100 so if you have not ordered do not delay too long. I will sell out.

Also concerning hogs, I will be testing a different hog ration this year. One with all small grains. No corn.

I will explain that hog ration and my plans in a future letter to you.

I think you will like it.

A couple of you have asked questions about how we raise hogs.

Because of that I will also write a detailed letter on that topic also.

On the topic of more complete use of the animals. Balm and Broth.

I have mentioned in earlier letters that I intend to promote the use of parts of the animals which are frequently wasted or under appreciated.

As you know we have had great results getting you to use lard for cooking and tallow for soap.

Balm

Cecilee and Sarah have collaborated (Actually it was Cecilee's idea.) on the production of a wonderful skin balm using tallow as the basic ingredient.

Excerpts from their recent messages follow.

From Sarah to Cecilee,

"Incredibly easy to make and absolutely fabulous to use"

From Cecilee to Sarah,

Yes! I rendered the tallow and made the balm today! I made four small jars of it. I experimented with a few different oils & kept one plain. Absolutely delightful! The whole fam agrees. It was super easy! We use young living oils & I decided to use geranium, ylang ylang & lavender. The plain lavender still smells tallowy, so I might try to warm that jar back up and add some other essential oils to it.

I'm happy to hear that you made some too! I have a feeling it will become a family favorite!

Sarah will add information about the balm to her blog this weekend.

Thank you, Cecilee for the initiative on this balm.

Also, remember that you can find this and other recent letters on Sarah's blog at www.sandhillfarmsarah.wordpress.com

Broth

This year we are working with our friends at Quality Meats to make bones for broth, marrow and soup more readily available to you.

Basically, rather than throwing unclaimed bones and other parts away, Quality will hold a stock for those of you who chose to use them.

For example, unclaimed ox tails will be held to supply to those who want them on a later order.

That way if more than one customer wants the ox tail from a given animal, extras will be available.

The same will be done with broth bones, marrow bones and livers, etc.

I will also supply recipes.

I ran across good recipes for tongue and heart yesterday.

You may recall that Sarah posted information on her blog titled, "Simple Beef Broth, 32 fewer ingredients than a Beef Bouillon Cube."

That particular article was prompted by a question from Alan.

On the topic of ox tails, Phyllis sent a very thoughtful letter which I have pasted below. Phyllis uses more ox tails than any other customer. She is an expert cook.

"Hi Tom;

I have really enjoyed your series on cooking and eating grass fed animals. As you know, I am crazy about making soups (broth) from the boney cuts of the animals I get from you and keep begging for more – unwanted soup bones, especially 'oxtail'. Oxtail is the name given to beef tails. I saw a reply from you to a customer who wanted to know, in effect, "Why bother?"

Here are some of my thoughts and insights into that question. Many from www.healthextremist.com after goggling HEALTH BENEFITS OF BROTH.

First for me is the incredible and complex taste. To me there is no other way to start a soup. A good, rich stock will gel when chilled. The French call it aspic. That gelatin is extremely healing amino acid(s): proline and glycine. These are very healing for various gut and digestive conditions. Glycine detoxifies and assists the liver. Glycine also regulates bile, blood sugar levels, muscular repair and growth by increasing creatine. Proline reverses arthroscopic deposits.

Bone broth aids in leaky gut and autoimmune diseases. It reduces inflammation, aids in obtaining optimal levels of nutrients, controls bacterial overgrowth, and boosts the immune system. The dissolved bones and joint connective tissue contain glucosamine and chondroitin, and many minerals including calcium, silicon, sulfur, magnesium, phosphorus and boron. Chinese medicine alludes to its benefits for improving cellulite, joint health, hair growth, and aiding in remineralizing teeth.

Our ancestors all made and ate broth. You will not find any of these benefits in a bouillon cube. Now you can hardly find any bones at the grocery store. They are considered waste. No doubt this is contributing to our arthritis problems. On a recent tropical vacation, I saw pig tail soup featured on several restaurant menus! My favorites are oxtail, pork hocks and feet, whole old laying hens or roosters and any bones that include the joints.

Please feel free to pass this on to your customers, even though it could mean fewer discarded bones for me.

Thanks;

Phyllis

PS: There is also much good meat to use after cooking your bones. Add that and your favorite veggies to make great soups!"

Dear Phyllis, I promise you will have all the ox tails you want. You have top priority.

I will begin work on the two hog letters tonight.

I need to get them done.

Spring is coming and it is getting pretty busy here.

Best possible regards.

Tom