

2013 Late August Update

From: Tom Barthel
Sent: Friday, August 23, 2013 4:36 PM
To: snakeriverfarmer@gmail.com
Subject: Late August Update, 2013

Dear Friends, Neighbors and Customers

Order **Confirmation** Letters

I sent emessages to most of you recently to confirm your fall orders.

Thank you for your responses.

A few who I communicated with in August did not get a such a letter because it was not needed.

Processing Choices

You should also have received the processing Choices sheet recently.

Please take the time now to contact Nancy at Quality Meats to arrange your processing before the harvest season rush.

320 968 7218 or info@qualitymeatsmn.com

If you are a new customer you may still be confused by all this.

If so, please email me.

Also, remember that Sarah has posted all the cooking tips, meat processing information, recipes etc. from the past year on her blog.

Go there for my past messages. She also posts some interesting items of her own there, of course.

www.sandhillfarmsarah.wordpress.com

I did not intend to bring up weather but many of you asked about it.

Despite a relatively dry spring we did get good rains at the beginning of July.

No rain since.

It is crackly, dusty dry.

We have gotten through by managing the pastures carefully.

I will start supplementing the cattle and bison herds with grass hay on tomorrow.

I guess that means it is fall.

The combination of good hay and lowland grazing will carry the animals just fine until harvest.

I mentioned to Sarah that it would be nice to get a normal year.

She said, "Maybe this is normal."

I am glad to be raising grass and not annual crops.

Around here, any corn or soybean fields that were not irrigated are ruined by drought.

Despite the shortage of rain, overall the growing season has been good.

The animals are excellent.

The cattle and bison are finishing quite nicely.

The hogs are robust and joyous.

Sarah, says the lambs will be much larger at harvest this year.

A small group of tourists from Spain drove up unexpectedly while I was writing this letter.

I showed them around the farm of course. Unfortunately the bison herd was out of sight somewhere deep in their low pasture.

If I know that folks are coming I can usually arrange to have the herd in an open pasture for viewing.

Yesterday, Gail, I and two grandkids, Saul and Ella staffed the Minnesota Grown Booth at the State Fair. It was fun.

We got there at 9 a.m. and the kids insisted on staying to see the fireworks at 10 p.m.

Some of you have met us in previous years at the Bison Booth but we (the Bison Association) have decided not to have a booth in this or future years.

My horse died recently.

I did not expect him to.

He was in excellent health as recently as late winter.

In March he helped me train the mustang Jake to bobsled.

I wrote a short note to my kids at his death.

They liked it so I have pasted it below.

He was a good horse.

Best regards.

Tom

The Gruella Died.

The Gruella had been rapidly losing weight for six weeks or so.

He was extremely thin but he was not wobbly weak.

He was at Sarah's keeping Saul's new pony company.

I had the vet out Tuesday.

Gruella walked right over when I called him for the vet.

He did not have a fever, moved well, was not stiff, ate well, had good teeth and was not physically depressed.

That ruled out many things like infection or Lyme's disease.

The vet guessed either cancer or organ failure.

We took blood samples.

The results, which I got today, did not indicate anything in particular.

Jordan found him dead Wednesday afternoon.

I think he died Tuesday night or early Wednesday morning.

His eyes were closed. That is unusual.

It is nice to think he died while sleeping.

Dave Tucker and his son helped me dig the grave.

I buried Gruella on the hill where the other horses are buried, except not too close to them.

About the distance he would have preferred.

He was a leader and had a strong sense of dignity and place.

When we would call the horses and tie them to the rail, he would never walk up until all the others were tied.

Then he would make an entrance and allow us to feed and tie him.

He is buried between two beautiful savanna oaks.

Gail took his name board from the hitching rail and placed it as a headstone.

Someday I will make a concrete marker for him like Nevada's.

I have buried many good horses on that hill.
Nevada was my boyhood horse. He is buried at the north slope.
My Pa bought Nevada for me when we were both twelve. We were 34 when Nevada died.

Gruella was 25.
I had figured on him living ten years longer.
Life is short.

Gail, Sarah, Jeannette and I went to Windom in the fall of 1993 to get two wild mustangs and two wild burros.

Sarah was a high school senior. Jeannette was a foreign exchange student from Venezuela.
It was a chilly, raw day.

Jeannette experienced a cold, drippy nose for the first time in her life.

She kept saying, "Dad, there is something wrong with my nose".

Jeannette is still part of our family. Married to a linguistics expert in Indiana.

That was also the day Sarah, coined the "damn fine" phrase.

She was referring to wild burros at the time but the expression works for horses too.

I use that phrase on the entrance sign to the farm, on my business cards and on the farm letterhead.

Gruella was a five year old stallion at the time.

He was a fighter and full of wounds.

He handled himself as if he had won most of those fights.

The Gruella tried to escape over a seven foot fence when the wranglers were loading him into my trailer.

There were 125 wild horses there that day. Gruella was the only one to attempt a breakout.

He was almost over before they were able to drive him down.

Jeannette named him.

"Gruella "is her spelling of a Spanish word for grey buckskin.

He was classic Mustang.

Stocky and muscular with a proud, arched nose.

I tamed him over that winter.

He was old to tame and awfully willful.

He would have preferred to kill me.

We settled that issue one day in a struggle that exhausted us both.

My lasso held.

Horses live by their rules.

After that he did just about anything I ever asked of him.

Terry was the first to ride him.

The Gruella was still a mustang stallion, though.

In 1995, he broke my pelvis trying to buck me off for a mare in heat.

When Gail got home, she drove me to the hospital.

They kept me for a few days.

Eleven months later, Misty, gave birth to Hawk.

Silver is Gruella's son by the mustang mare, Maria.

The Gruella was a damn fine horse.

Tom

