

Dear Friends, Neighbors and Customers

I have lived at this latitude for over six decades yet I am still amazed at how quickly the seasons change. The change in the length of daylight is particularly astonishing. In June, it is hard to have enough energy to work from morning until dusk. Now it is hard to get enough work done in the brief daylight. The cooler temperature is grand for working, however. I love Minnesota seasons.

I am not going to write about weather except to mention that we have had over five inches of rain in the past month.

A great blessing for the grasses and trees after the brutally dry and hot summer.

Harvest is going exactly as scheduled.

About 50 bovines, beef and bison have been harvested since September.

By next week, 50 hogs will have been harvested also.

Many of you asked for your meat later, meaning November.

Quality Meats, like all butcher shops, focuses on deer processing during the deer hunting season.

The deer season is unusually late this year, starting November 9.

Many of your animals will be harvested in the last days of November and the first week of December.

There is nothing wrong with that. It just means I will be very busy until mid December.

In the meantime, the remaining animals, beef, bison and hogs are doing exceptionally well.

The cool weather stimulates their appetites and they are finishing well.

If you have any questions about your order, please ask.

Delivery

That too is going as planned.

I am making a metro trip each Friday. Normally delivering 10 to 12 orders.

Applebee's in Maple Grove is the most popular drop off point.

After meeting a number of you there, I normally drive to several homes.

Most of you travel to Quality Meats in Foley to pick up your meat. That is good because I can only deliver a fraction of your orders.

Nevertheless, please email if you need or want delivery.

Many of you have multiple orders and I try to time those orders concurrently.

But it is not always possible.

Please do not let that be an irritation. Ask me to deliver instead.

I am happy to deliver as many orders as I can.

Lambs

The 12 lambs that Sarah and Jordan raised for you will be harvested tomorrow.

Those are all taken, of course.

There are some additional lambs available.

Our good neighbors, Cory and Paula Welles have a few lambs for sale.

They have four primarily grass-fed lambs of a small breed available.

I wrote "primarily grass-fed" because Cory feeds them a cup of grain now and then.

My guess is these smaller lambs will have a hanging weight per ½ of around 20 pounds.

The Welle's farm is just a mile upstream on the Snake but these are not our animals.

If you are interested, call Cory at 612 363 2380.

I do not know much about Cory's lambs but I do know Cory.

You can trust him.
I do.

Well actually, I am going to write more about weather but not in the normal sense.

I am a member of the Dakota Territory Bison Association which is based in Rapid City.

Because of that, I get direct information about the effects of the recent blizzards on livestock.

We do not watch TV so you may be better informed than I am in some details. Nevertheless, I will write a little about the behavior of beef animals in a blizzard.

Many years ago, my herd was caught in an early blizzard. I was at work in Minneapolis.

The roads were bad and it took many hours for me to get home.

It was long after dark and the blizzard was in full force when I set out to locate the herd.

Cattle bunch together tight to seek warmth. The animals on the windy side continuously push into the herd or move around to the downwind side for protection.

The net effect is that the herd grinds slowly but relentlessly downwind.

In the darkness of a blizzard, they do so in complete blindness.

By the time I found my cattle they had ground through several fence lines. They were almost a mile south working across a neighboring farm.

I doubt that they noticed the fences.

Nor would they notice a river, a ravine or a cliff.

Something like that but on a much more spacious and more numerous scale occurred in the Dakotas and Nebraska.

The storm came so early that the cattle did not have winter coats.

Nor were the ranchers and farmer ready to deal with winter weather.

To survive winter, cattle and horses need winter coats, shelter at times and feed (hay) at all times.

None of those was available.

Many ranchers lost 20% or more of their beef animals including cows.

Some herds ended up 20 miles or more from their home ranch. Many herds were mixed.

Horses although fewer in number, seem to have suffered even worse. In some ways, their winter survival skills are weaker than cattle. Few horses actually live in herds.

In a blizzard, bison either rest buried in the snow or they stand facing the wind. They do not move with the storm. A blizzard does not seem to frighten them. As near as I can tell, they enjoy snow and cold.

The director of the Dakota Bison Association surveyed bison ranchers after the storm. She did not find a single report of a bison death from the blizzard.

Invoices, Recipes and Cooking Instructions

This year, to make it easier for myself, I am sending email invoices only.

The email invoices are working out well.

I have one concern, however.

In previous years, I sent cooking instructions and recipes with your mailed invoice.

I am worried that some of you, especially new customers will overcook your grass-fed meat.

That is very easy to do.

In fact, if you simply cook this meat as you have cooked store purchased, feedlot meat, you will ruin it.

I have been tacking some simple instructions for cooking beef and pork to the invoices.

Please read and follow those suggestions.

There are many good recipes and a lot of relevant information about cooking pastured meat on Sarah's blog.

www.sandhillfarmsarah.wordpress.com

We recently posted some photos on the facebook page, "Snake River Farm Minnesota."

I will paste one to this emessage.

Some of you sent photos from Fall Farm Day which I have not yet posted.

That is because of some combination of too busy and too confused about how to use facebook.

Best possible regards.

Tom

p.s. This is the very best time of the year for a farmer.