

2014 Early April Update

From: Tom Barthel

Sent: Tuesday, April 8, 2014 10:22 PM

To: Tom Barthel <Snakeriverfarmer@gmail.com>

Subject: Early April Update

Dear Friends, Neighbors and Customers

I just posted photos of maple syruping on the Snake River Farm Minnesota facebook page.

Link to our Facebook page.

[Snake River Farm Minnesota on Facebook](#)

I built one small and one large **chicken trailer** last week. I will post photos of those in a couple days. The goal is to provide a safe home for the animals, especially at night, yet allow movement to fresh pastures.

Ryan is building a chicken trailer at his farm also. He gets chicks about April 16.

Our chicks are due May 6th so they will still be “cute” on Spring Farm Day.

The most important issue with pasturing chickens and other small animals is keeping them safe from predators.

Minnesota has a great variety of predators. That must be a measure of how well we conserve our wildlife.

Protecting small animals is especially challenging here on this farm. The Snake River winds through our farm for a mile. For predator travel, the river is the freeway. In addition, the Sherburne Wildlife Refuge is just across the road.

Of course, we enjoy all the wildlife immensely; we do all we can to provide habitat.

Last evening, within a few minutes, I saw and heard swans, cranes, geese, eagles and turkeys.

All of those wonderful birds were either extremely rare or non-existent when I was a boy.

In many ways, we are doing a good job of conservation.

Spring Farm Day is May 17. Mark it on your calendars and plan to come. I will send more details as the time gets near.

Baby chickens, turkey chicks, ducklings all due on May 6th.

Over 100 little pigs May 6th also.

Four rabbits does are due to produce litters the first week of May.

Tomorrow, I start bringing beef calves home.

No bison calves yet but I dreamt one was born last night. Soon.

Gail and I attended the **Minnesota Buffalo Association Conference** last weekend. I have been director and secretary of that organization for six years. It is an excellent organization with members from 15

states and Canada. My position was due for reelection. I notified my colleagues some months ago that I did not intend to serve another term. I felt that six years was enough. I believe younger people should be brought in to the leadership positions. I was able to recruit and nominate an impressive young bison farmer from northern Iowa. She was raised on the family farm, moved to Colorado to teach, and later returned to Iowa to farm with her elderly father.

I guess I mention this because it feels so good to be able to hand an important job over to someone you believe can do better than you.

A saw a fisher before sun-up one morning last week. Fishers are in the weasel family, related to Martins. They are over ten pounds and vicious hunters. As far as I know, we are far south of their normal range. I saw one along the river spot forty years ago, in nearly the same.

The fisher was traveling through the trees along the river. I observed it for only a few seconds but was confident it was a fisher. It is apparently a newcomer because it was startled when it saw the cattle.

I mentioned it to Gail and no one else. Sunday, a friend who is a master hunter and a very careful observer stopped by to chat. He mentioned that he saw a fisher in our woods. That clinches it.

Just went out to lock up Gail's hens for the night. Owls were hooting in three directions.

Gosh, they are splendid in the dark.

They know it too.

Spring is grand.

Best regards.

Tom