

## 2014 Late July Update

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**Date:** July 27, 2014 at 9:50:22 PM CDT

**To:** "Tom Barthel ([snakeriverfarmer@gmail.com](mailto:snakeriverfarmer@gmail.com))" <[snakeriverfarmer@gmail.com](mailto:snakeriverfarmer@gmail.com)>

**Subject:** Late July Update

### Dear Friends, Neighbors and Customers

#### Butterflies

Our pastures contain hundreds of plant species that are not grasses.

Most of those plants are called forbs.

Forbs are flowering herbaceous plants that are not grasses.

Forbs are tremendously important for many reasons.

One of those reasons is that they feed insects including butterflies.

Several types of milkweed grow on our farm including the common milkweed.

The common milkweed has beautiful and fragrant summer blossoms.

It is also a critical part of the food and life cycle of the monarch butterfly.

Only a few years ago we would see thousands of monarchs each summer.

The numbers have dropped off terrifically and last year I saw none.

The exact cause of the reduction in monarchs is unknown. Habitat loss and agricultural insecticides are likely suspects.

I have seen more than ten monarch butterflies this summer.

Not a lot, but much better than none.

#### Weather.

July is the month that brings the greatest danger of drought.

Our upland pastures were on the verge of dry when we received almost an inch of rain Friday.

The pastures were heading into dormancy. The rain and a couple of cooler days have greened them up wonderfully.

From April to June this year I have been interseeding many pastures to increase the variety and quality of our pastures.

The seedlings were starting to suffer from a lack of moisture.

The rain was crucial to nurture those millions of new legumes, grasses and forbs.

I suppose you would have to be a farmer to appreciate how sweet summer rain can be.

This was a magnificently sweet, summer rain.

With a little luck we could have a summer without a significant dry period. The first in five years.

#### Wildlife.

The wild turkeys have hatched well. I see many hens with clutches each day.

Lots of does with fawns also.

The DNR reports that deer numbers are down because of the long winter. That is not the situation here.

#### Chickens

We harvested the first 200 birds two weeks ago.

About 150 of those were designated for you who requested early chickens.

That means about 50 will be available to fill the orders of those of you who did not designate for July chickens.

Please contact me if you are in the "not July" group and would like to pick up your chickens in Foley the week of August 4<sup>th</sup>.

I will not know exactly how many are available until after the next delivery on August 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The packaged birds look super. They taste superb.

We are working to fill all chicken orders by late September.  
That will probably be done in two more groups.  
One in late August and the last in September.  
I will keep you informed.

**Fall Harvest Schedule for bison, beef, pork and lambs.**

I will send a more detailed message next week.  
That message will include the processing guide which will help you set-up your processing instructions with Quality Meats.  
I will also ask you about your preferences for large or small and early or late. Wait for that message.  
Briefly, I intend to start the beef harvest in late August and finish it in early December.  
That is several weeks earlier than in past years.  
There are a couple reasons for that.  
One, the abundant pastures have put many of the animals into finished condition. (They are ready.)  
Two, we have almost 100 bovines to harvest and process. Both I and Quality meats need to spread that work load out.  
Bison will be harvested from September to December.  
Hogs will be harvested starting in late October, ending in December.  
Sarah will communicate directly about lambs but I do know they will be harvested in late October.

**Mercola Link**

Good friend and customer, Dr. Michael Oste sent a link to an informative article about factory farmed chickens.

Far over 90% of all meat raised in the US is done in this same general way.

Click below if you are interested.

The negative health, environment, soil and social effects of modern agriculture are virtually boundless.  
Frankly, I try not to dwell on it. I focus on doing the best I can for this land and for these animals. One should be informed, however.

[http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2014/07/23/cheap-factory-farmed-chicken.aspx?e\\_cid=20140723Z1-USOnly\\_DNL\\_art\\_1&utm\\_source=dnl&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=art1&utm\\_campaign=20140723Z1-USOnly&et\\_cid=DM52468&et\\_rid=595668773](http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2014/07/23/cheap-factory-farmed-chicken.aspx?e_cid=20140723Z1-USOnly_DNL_art_1&utm_source=dnl&utm_medium=email&utm_content=art1&utm_campaign=20140723Z1-USOnly&et_cid=DM52468&et_rid=595668773)

Every growing season has its challenges and imperfections but thus far this has been the best year in many.

Enjoy your summer.

Farming is good.

Best possible regards.

Tom

p.s. Fall Farm Day is Saturday, September 20.

