

2014 NEWSLETTER

## **SNAKE RIVER FARM Newsletter**

**January 2014**

**BISON, CATTLE, HOGS and damn fine HORSES**

**and Order Solicitation**

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### **Dear Friends and Customers**

In this letter, I will update you on plans for 2014.

I am also asking you to place your 2014 order in the next month or two. **Order now if you are ready.** Early ordering allows us to plan. It also assures that we will have the meat you wish in the fall.

### **2013 was a busy year at the farm.**

We raised and harvested 81 beef animals, 17 bison, 104 hogs and 12 lambs for you.

That is about the maximum number of animals we can produce in the humane and natural ways we prefer.

We now have over 300 active customer families. Many of you visit the farm and we have gotten to know you personally. We would like to know you all, as well as remember your special needs and preferences. My daughter Sarah and her family will again raise **lambs** for you on their "Sand Hill Farm." She has written a letter for you concerning lambs. You can find Sarah's message near the end of this letter.

**This is a small family farm.** Well, three small family farms actually.

As most of you know, my daughter Sarah, her husband Jordan, son Saul and baby daughter Hazel built their home on 80 acres nearby. They call their farm **Sand Hill Farm.**

Some of your beef animals graze there. They raise all of the sheep on their farm.

Ryan and Ashley Straw, their sons, Hunter and Colton and daughter Savanna graze some beef animals for you on their **Five Straw Farm.** Ryan also raises a small herd of your hogs.

That gives us about 300 acres of grazing land to work with.

All the bison, most of the beef animals and the great majority of the hogs are raised here at Snake River Farm.

### **Pastured pigs on Special Diets.**

In 2013 we raised a group of 30 hogs on a new oat and wheat diet. The normal diet is oats and corn.

Those wheat hogs did perfectly well. We will raise a similar group of oat-wheat hogs in 2014.

As you know, all of our hogs are pastured and provided with a special blend of high roughage feed.

I grind that feed here at the farm.

If you got a wheat hog, I would appreciate your feedback on the taste and quality of the meat.

Grain prices vary but wheat averages about 30% more costly than corn. Because of that I have increased the price for wheat hogs 25 cents per pound.

**Our 2014 prices are as follows, per pound hanging weight.** Beef & bison by the ¼, hogs & lamb by the ½.

Bison \$5.25, Beef \$3.00, Pork \$2.10, Pork special wheat diet, \$2.35, Lamb \$5.00

**Beef and Bison for Ground Meat Only.** Bison \$4.50 Beef \$2.50

Last year you purchased 18 beef animals and four bison for ground meat. Obviously, the demand is strong so we will repeat that offering again this year. We will harvest beef animals for ground meat in mid-June and again in the fall. We will harvest bison for ground beef in the late fall. June ground bison will depend on demand. You can order for ground meat by the 1/10<sup>th</sup> animal which equals about 57 pounds hanging and 30 pounds of packaged meat. You can order any number of 1/10<sup>th</sup> portions. I will send further announcements and more details in time.

**No deposit is required with your order**, just your honest estimate of what you want.

**You can change or cancel your order** at any time before harvest. Sooner is better for us. It gives us time to make schedule changes. You can cancel or change for any reason. The most common reason for order changes in recent years has been job loss or financial set-back. We understand that.

**Harvest Timing and Relative Portion Size.**

Bison and beef will be harvested from early September until early December.

Hogs will be harvested in October and November.

Lambs will be harvested in October or November. **Place lamb orders with Sarah. See Sarah's letter below.**

If you prefer harvest **early or late** in those periods, let me know.

If you prefer a relatively **larger or smaller** animal, I can accommodate that also. Just tell me when you order.

**About Our Processor, Quality Meats**

Quality Meats in Foley process all of our animals.

Bethany and Nick Orton own quality Meats. Both Beth and Nick are excellent butchers.

Nancy at Quality Meats answers the phone and helps you with your processing instructions.

We are happy to have Quality Meats as our processor. They work hard to do things the way we, and you, desire.

320 968 7218 [info@qualitymeatsmn.com](mailto:info@qualitymeatsmn.com)

**2014 Farm Events and Visits**

Lard rendering Days are **February 1 and 15**. Both are Saturdays, from noon until dark.

Our Spring Customer Day is **Saturday May 17** from noon until sundown. Bring your family and friends.

The Fall Customer Day is **Saturday September 20**, from noon to sundown.

I will email details as these events draw near.

**Sarah's Lamb Letter**

**Sand Hill Farm is now accepting orders for fall 2014 lambs.**

All 2013 lambs were committed to customers by May 2013, please order now if you intend to purchase. This year we will raise a few more lambs for you, but they are still limited. We ask you only order if you intend to purchase in fall.

The lambs are grass-fed, rotating through a series of oak savannah pastures on our 80 acre farm.

They will be harvested in late October or early November at 8-10 months of age.

This year's price will remain \$5 per pound hanging weight. Lambs are offered by the ½ or whole animal. 2013 lambs had an average hanging weight of 60 pounds (30 per half). A half of lamb costs \$150 on average. This yields about 15-18 lbs of packaged meat, for an estimated cost of \$8-\$10/pound prior to processing.

You will also pay a processing fee direct to Quality Meats in Foley, same as with any animals you may purchase from Snake River Farm. Processing is typically less than \$1/pound, with sausage or other highly processed meats costing more. Ask Quality Meats when you give them processing directions in the fall. As in the past, we will provide you with an informational sheet on processing choices closer to harvest. No down payment is required with your order. If at some point you need to cancel, we understand. No explanation required. However, please keep in mind that cancellations, especially late fall cancellations, complicate matters for us and waitlisted customers. We so much enjoy having lambs on the farm, our little Hazel most of all. Thank you for trusting us to raise food for your family.

Sarah, Jordan, Saul and Hazel  
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952-358-0235

[skortmansky@gmail.com](mailto:skortmansky@gmail.com)  
[www.sandhillfarmsarah.wordpress.com](http://www.sandhillfarmsarah.wordpress.com)

We have a Face Book page "Snake River Farm Minnesota." There are photos there. If you have questions please email. Email works best for me.  
[snakeriverfarmer@gmail.com](mailto:snakeriverfarmer@gmail.com)  
Best regards and thank you.  
Tom Barthel

## **SNAKE RIVER FARM**

### **January 2014**

## **Introductory Letter,**

### **BISON, CATTLE, HOGS and damn fine HORSES**

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### **Pasture Grown Bison, Beef and Hogs.**

This letter is an introduction to Snake River Farm.  
You should find it useful for details of how we raise animals and do business.  
Please pass this letter on to a friend that could become a customer.

### **Our Goals**

To humanely raise and harvest our animals,  
to be good stewards of our land,  
to grow delicious healthy meat,  
to sell that meat at a fair price  
and to provide authentic country experiences to our customers.

### **The Snake River Farm.**

The Farm consists of 225 acres located in the center of Sherburne County.  
We are 50 miles northwest of Minneapolis and 20 miles east of St. Cloud.  
The Farm is a mixture of open pasture, native prairie, oak savanna, wet meadows and lowland.

The Snake River, a small, beautiful stream, winds through the farm for a mile.

We have divided the farm into forty pastures.

We rotate our herds through the pastures according to the seasons.

In addition to farm buildings, we have a fully functional one-room schoolhouse, a museum of farm and household tools, and a playground for kids.

We enjoy using our horses for wagon and bobsled rides.

### **Animals we raise.**

We keep only as many animals as our grazing land can handle.

We raise bison, cattle and hogs (Plus grassfed lambs from Sand Hill Farm) for direct sale to consumers.

In 2014, we intend to harvest and sell 15 bison, 80 beef and 100 hogs.

We keep about ten horses for enjoyment and for farm work. Most of our horses are mustangs.

All of our horses are trained to ride and drive.

All of our animals live in a natural environment. The animals are in herds that meet their social needs.

Our bison and beef eat only grass and grass hay throughout the year.

We raise our hogs in large outdoor pasture-lots.

Our hogs are raised on a special mixed diet as suits their nature.

We use only natural feeds which do not contain medications or antibiotics.

Our hog feed is mixed and ground on the farm by us, from locally grown grains.

We have no feedlots or handling pens. Our animals have plenty of space at all times.

A typical pasture has both high and low ground, trees for shade and running water.

Our animals are relaxed and healthy. They grow slowly compared to grain-fed or feedlot-fed animals.

We harvest most of our bison and beef animals between 18 and 30 months of age.

We harvest hogs at about 8 months.

### **How and when we Harvest.**

We harvest our animals humanely. Beef and bison are pasture harvested, on the farm. Pasture harvest, means we kill the animal in the pasture then transport them immediately to Quality Meats in Foley for butchering and processing.

Pasture harvesting eliminates handling and trauma for the animals.

It also maintains meat taste and quality because the animals are not in a state of stress.

We harvest most of our bison and beef animals from early September until early December for many good and natural reasons. We harvest a few animals in June primarily for ground meat.

We harvest our hogs in October and November.

Quality Meats is a state licensed facility.

### **How we sell our Meat.**

We sell most of our bison and beef by the quarter and hogs by the half. We harvest a few select animals for ground meat only. Those animals are sold in smaller portions generally yielding about 30 pounds of finished ground meat.

We price our meat based on hanging weight. Hanging weight is the weight of the meat after the animal is butchered but before the meat is cut, ground and wrapped.

The folks at Quality Meats in Foley determine the hanging weight on their calibrated scale.

Bison quarters in 2014 will range between 90 and 125 pounds hanging weight.

Beef quarters in 2014 will be 120 to 170 pounds hanging weight. You can request larger or smaller quarters.

All quarters are mixed. That means all quarters from a given animal are equal. No front or hindquarters. Every quarter buyer gets essentially the same cuts of meat.

Hog hanging weight is between 100 and 160 pounds per half. Again, you may request a smaller or larger half.

You tell Quality meats how you want your meat cut and wrapped.

### **How you pay for your meat.**

We do not require a deposit, just your honest intention to purchase the meat.

We will send an invoice to you immediately after your animal is harvested. Normally by email.

You should pay that amount to us via check upon receipt of the invoice.

The folks at Quality Meats are very helpful and easy to work with.

They will process and package your meat any way you like. Processing averages about 60 cents per hanging pound.

You pay us, (Snake River Farm) for the meat and you pay Quality Meats for the processing.

### **We work to make this easy and simple for you.**

You are welcome and encouraged to visit the farm. We have Winter, Spring and Fall Customer days, but if those dates are not convenient for you, you are welcome to visit any time we are home.

There is no penalty for changing or cancelling your order but please tell us of a change before we harvest your animal.

We will email a processing instruction form to you before your animal is harvested.

The processing form makes it simple and easy for you to tell the folks at Quality Meats exactly how you want your meat processed and packaged.

Do not be anxious if this is your first time buying meat this way. We are committed to making this easy for you.

A quarter of bison or beef, or a half of hog will require about three cubic feet of freezer space. It will fit easily into a small chest freezer, the kind that sells for around \$250. Gail has one that has been running perfectly in our unheated garage for over ten years.

If necessary, we can help with delivery of your meat. We can probably arrange a time that allows me to combine several errands into one trip. I am happy to meet you at a prearranged location. Normally there is no charge for mutually convenient delivery.

### **Our 2014 Prices.**

First a few words about prices in general. If you are searching to buy meat in bulk to get the lowest possible price, we may not have what you want. We are not raising a commodity. Our prices are very reasonable for grass fed animals, raised and harvested humanely. It takes longer and it costs more to raise animals naturally.

Naturally raised animals produce healthier meat.

Hanging weight price for **bison is \$5.25** per pound, **beef is \$3.00** per pound, **pork is \$2.10** or **\$2.35** (for special oat-wheat diet) per pound, and **lamb (from Sand Hill Farm) is \$5** per pound.

Bison and beef sold for ground meat only are priced \$0.50 per pound lower.

### **More about the Farm and the Fall and Spring Customer Days.**

Our Spring Customer Day is **Saturday May 17, 2014** from noon until sundown.

Our Fall Customer Day is **Saturday September 20**, from noon to sundown. Bring your family and friends. There are picnic areas, a playground, a farm museum, chickens to feed, a furnished one-room schoolhouse and more.

Of course, you will be able to see all the animals up close, including the bison.

On the Customer Days and at many other times during the year we hitch horses to wagons or bobsleds and give rides through the farm.

Email works best for contacting us. [snakeriverfarmer@gmail.com](mailto:snakeriverfarmer@gmail.com)  
If you prefer, our phone has an answering machine. 763 263 2721.  
Best Regards and thank you for your interest. Tom Barthel