

## **Winter Farm Day is Saturday February 10 2017**

**From:** SNAKE RIVER FARM <Tom@snakeriverfarmmn.com>

**Sent:** Friday, February 10, 2017 6:04 PM

**To:** SNAKE RIVER FARM <Tom@snakeriverfarmmn.com>

**Subject:** Winter Farm day is Saturday, February 18.

### **Dear Friends, Neighbors and Customers**

Winter Farm day is a week away.

#### **Saturday, February 18, from 1 to 5 pm.**

We have almost no snow and there is little chance of getting enough for good sledding in the next week.

The forecast for the 18<sup>th</sup> is 40 degrees and sunny.

That should be very pleasant.

It might be a little puddly but our sand dries out fast.

The big stove in the barn will be fired up to provide warmth and to render lard.

We will hitch horses for wagon rides and saddle a few too.

The boys will give tractor drawn wagon rides also.

We will do horse wagon rides to see the bison and tractor wagon rides to the one room school.

John will be demonstrating and teaching metal working and black smithing.

I am sure that you can get some hands on training if you wish.

Phyllis will be teaching how to make ox-tail soup. She will have handmade mittens for sale to benefit charity.

We will have a stock of packaged, frozen ox-tails on hand. You can have ox-tails for the cost of handling only.

The main event in the barn will be lard rendering but that has become less of a focus in recent years.

Most of you have learned how to render your lard at home using the low temperature technique.

Gail will build an inventory of lard next week for those of you who are new to it.

Of course, we will be rendering lard all day over the big wood stove, but only so much can be done in that way. You can help.

Some of that fresh lard will be used to make fresh old fashioned donuts, to deep fry sweet potatoes and to produce homemade French fries.

Playground for kids, farm museum, one room school, lots of room to play.

As always, please keep watch to see that the kids play safely. We take many precautions to keep the farm safe. Please help us with that.

I have posted a couple of things to Facebook in the past week.

Many of you do not use Facebook, so I will past one photo and article in this letter.

Gail, Ella and I drove to rapid City last week for the Dakota Territory Buffalo Association Conference.

We took in a rodeo while there. Ella is a terrific rodeo fan.

While there we chatted with Ilana Zinos the curator of the National Bison Museum. Ilana told us that several scientist determined that the ancient bison we gave them last fall is a "Bison Antiquus". I knew that, based on the size and age but it is nice to have it confirmed by experts. Google "Bison Antiquus" if you want to know more.

Almost 200 families have placed their 2017 orders.

Thank you for that.

Email me if you have questions.

I hope to see many of you on February 18th

Best regards.

Tom

Article below.

### Buffalo in Winter Pasture.



On the left is a twelve-year-old bison cow. Bill our herd bull is on the right.

We bought Bill from the Blue Mounds State Park herd in the summer of 2014. He was a two-year-old at that time. In the Fall of 2015 he got a promotion to herd bull when I harvested his predecessor. The previous Bill was ten-years-old and developing some bad habits. He made perfectly fine hamburger. We keep less than ten cows and therefore need only one herd bull. There are always younger bulls in the herd but since those bulls are harvested before they reach three, they are not big enough to challenge the herd bull. At the time of Bill's promotion, a year ago, he was no taller than a mature cow. As you can see, his hump has grown substantially. His weight is around 1200 pounds. The average cow next to him is 1000 pounds at most. Bill should keep growing until he is 8 or more. By then he should weigh between 1600 and 2000 pounds.

Bill's horns, physique and coat are developing very nicely. He is physically very active (read between the lines here) well-mannered, gentle with the younger bison, and calm.

The cow is the senior female in the herd. She is not the oldest but she is the highest status cow. She produces a good calf every year. She will probably continue to do so until she is in her twenties. Bison live longer than cattle.

The bison are standing in a pasture of native prairie grasses. Switchgrass, Big Blue Stem, Indian Grass and Little Blue Stem are all visible in the photo. The pasture was grazed twice in early 2016. The last grazing was at the beginning of July. These native grasses are identified as “warm season” plants. That means they do well in summer heat and produce seeds in late summer. I purposely held the herds out through the summer and fall so that the plants could produce seed. As the bison winter graze, they will work the seeds into the soil along with manure. This process plants the seeds thus thickening the sward for the future.

In some areas of the pasture where the plant density is low, we will inter-seed cool season grasses, legumes and forbs early in the spring. A greater variety of plants will make the pasture more productive and accelerate soil building.

I will place hay bales in the thinner areas of this pasture. The bison are standing in such a thin area. The hay will supplement the native grasses to assure an adequate diet for the animals. Doing so will also improve the soil and stimulate a denser sward of plants.

I will post a photo and article on “Winter Bale Grazing” soon. Best regards. Tom

**Link to our Facebook page.**

[Snake River Farm Minnesota on Facebook](#)

**Contact Quality Meats, Foley**

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