

SNAKE RIVER FARM

BISON, CATTLE and damn fine HORSES

Tom Barthel & Gail Wilkinson

18251 62nd Street, SE

Becker, MN 55308 763 263 2721

Late Summer, 2009 Newsletter

Dear Friends and Customers

It has been a good summer. The rains have been scarce but even so the grazing has been pretty good. Our entire farm is pasture. When rain is infrequent or short, grass is more forgiving than annual row crops such as corn. Just for the fun of it I calculated the gallons of water in 1/8th inch of rainfall on 225 acres. It is over 800,000 gallons. Thinking of it that way, 1/2 inch is a lot of rain.

A lot of you have visited us this past spring and summer. We enjoy that. If time allows, and it usually does, we hitch up some horses and take visitors for a wagon ride to see the bison and cattle herds.

Some of you visit us several times a year, some less often and some never. We would like you to come to enjoy the farm more often. You are welcome to bring your families or friends to see the animals and visit the farm anytime we are home.

Our Fall Open Farm Day is Saturday, October 3rd.

We'll have horses hitched for wagon and cart rides. You, your family and friends are invited. It is totally informal and relaxed. No selling. Just a nice day in the country. You don't need to be a customer to attend.

With this mailing you should also receive a sheet titled Introductory Letter. That letter provides details about how we grow, sell, harvest and process our meat. If you have questions or are a new customer please read that Introductory Letter. Please pass it on to other potential customers.

2009 Harvest Plans and Your Order.

No deposit required. You can change your order anytime.

The hogs won't be harvested until late November but they have been all sold since early July. Last year we were sold out of Beef by September and we are on track for that again this year. We are a little more flexible on the number of bison we can harvest because we keep more of them. Even so, we will sell just about all the bison that will be the right age, size and condition again this year. My point is that if you have not ordered, don't delay any longer.

In this mailing I have included a handwritten note that indicates what I believe you have on order.

Please review that note and tell me immediately if you wish to change your order or if I have erred. Remember, if you have changed your mind for any reason and want to cancel your order that is just fine.

Timing of your harvest

Some of you have asked for your bison or beef earlier or later in the fall. For example some as asked for meat ASAP. Others want theirs in October or later if possible. I can generally accommodate such requests but you need to let me know if you have a preference. Otherwise I simply fill orders in the sequence that the orders were placed.

Bison

People sometimes ask if we castrate bison bulls to produce steers. As you probably know that is the norm with beef animals. The answer for bison is no. Bison steers for some reason do not do well. That is not a problem however. It has been well established in numerous taste tests that people cannot tell the difference between bison meat from heifers or bulls. It matters more that the animals are relatively young and in good condition. Bison bulls are larger than heifers of the same age. I mention all this because we will be harvesting about an equal number of heifers and bulls this fall (nature produces them that way).

Generally the heifers will be between 100 and 125 pounds per quarter and the bulls will be 120 to 150 pounds per quarter. The difference to you will only be in size. If you prefer a heavier or lighter quarter, please let me know. Otherwise you will just get bull or heifer as your name comes up on the list.

Beef

The beef we harvest this fall are mostly heifers with a couple of steers. Mostly Black Angus, Red Angus a few Herefords and one Charolais. These are all beef type animals selected to grow and finish well on grass. They are a beautiful bunch of animals.

The following applies to both Beef and Bison.

All quarters are similar. The butcher shop mixes fronts and backs to give everyone a variety of cuts.

You tell Quality Meats how to cut and package your meat.

You should pay us for the hanging weight before you pick up your meat.

You pay Quality Meats for the processing when you pick up your meat. About 60 cents per pound.

The folks at the butcher shop are very easy to get along with. Ask for Beth or Nancy. If you are a new customer I tell them so and they will be particularly helpful.

Hogs

I think we have 100% reorder by last year's hog customers. I am raising ten more this year than last but they were all sold by early July. The hogs are having a great summer.

They have plenty of space to root and dig.

Because they are outside and get a lot of exercise, the hogs grow slowly and stay lean.

Last year they dressed out to hanging weights that ranged from 120 to 150 pounds per half.

The hogs are taken to Quality Meats in Foley for processing. You specify how you want the meat processed.

The folks there can do anything you like including sausages, brats, hams and bacon.

I can pick up your processed meat, bison, beef or pork and deliver it to you home if you wish. No charge.

A quarter of bison or beef or a half hog will fit easily in a small chest freezer.

Prices

Bison price is \$3 per pound, hanging weight, plus processing of around 60 cents per pound.

Beef price is \$2.10 per pound, hanging weight, plus processing of around 60 cents per pound.

Pork price is \$1.50 per pound, hanging weight, plus processing. Processing charges vary a lot on hogs, because many of our customers have Quality Meats make specialty products and even have other meats added for sausages etc. The pork is incredibly good and it is lean.

Free Stuff for Our Customers.

As a customer you can also take advantage of the following at no cost;

1. **Farm Tours** and horse drawn wagon or bobsled rides for your family and friends. Prearranged of course. Animals, one-room school house, farm museum, nature, camp sites, woods, stream and prairie.
2. **Skulls, hides** and other parts picked up on the day of harvest. You just need to be there and be the first to ask. (Note. The next six hides are spoken for by several different customers.)
3. **Compost** available anytime. You can easily fill a few pails or I can dump a loader scoop into your pick-up or trailer. (We loaded over 40 pick-up and trailer loads this past spring.)
4. **Pure lard** from hog back-fat. Folks who make their own bread, pies or cookies say it gives better results than store bought lard. In fact Gail makes bread every week but she stops if she runs out of our lard.
5. **Cracklings**. If you have to ask you probably don't want any. Some people use it instead of butter.
6. **Edible liver**, packaged and frozen. We always have extra because some folks don't take it. Does anyone want liver for dog or cat food? I've got plenty.
7. **No charge meat delivery** to mutually convenient site and time.

Email works best. tbarthel@clarus-medical.com

Or call us at 763 263 2721 and leave a message.

Best Regards,
Tom Barthel