

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

The farm year is finishing up and most everything here, including me is ready for winter.

The hogs are all gone.

The beef herd is down to the few animals that we will winter over.

The bison are in their winter pasture.

It was a good year. Things seldom, if ever, go exactly as planned but it was close enough.

I think all of your orders were filled. I believe you all got what you needed.

The weights on all the animals, bison, beef and hogs were lower than normal.

The general belief amongst farmers is that the cool wet spring and then the intensely hot summer slowed growth.

I know it did for the hogs. They spent a month or two just hanging around the sprinklers.

Keeping cool.

The lack of rain since August did not help either. The fall grasses were not the best for growth and finishing.

Nevertheless, all the animals were in excellent health and quality at harvest time.

Every year is different. No year is perfect.

In buying meat that is naturally grown, you are connected to nature and to the seasons, just like we and the animals.

### **Lard rendering and Bobsledding**

I should have mentioned it earlier but if you left your hog lard with Quality Meats, they will hold it for me and then on a couple Saturdays this winter we will invite you to the farm for lard rendering and bobsledding. Many of you have done this with us in past years. I will send announcement via emessages a few weeks in advance. You can each take a couple jars of pure white lard home. The lard from our hogs is nothing like the plastic shortening you buy in the store. We'll also have cracklins for you to take and fresh old fashioned donuts. There will be more information in the announcement. We'll see if we can get Grand Chef Darrell to teach some of his uses for cracklings.

The bobsledding is the real thing of course. Behind horses. (Snow is required.)

### **Gail's Doing Wonderfully**

As you know, Gail had a bad fall on October 5<sup>th</sup> and broke her neck very severely. Her full recovery is virtually complete. She has been back to work for a month. On Wednesday we went for the final visit to her neurosurgeon. They had a routine x-ray taken. The technician insisted that she look at the film with him. He was impressed with how much hardware she has implanted. Even with all the reconstruction her neck is flexible. She is a very lucky woman and she knows it.

Thank you all for your prayers, get well messages, help and offers of help.

### **A Christmas Calf**

A beef cow that I bought a little while ago had a calf Friday. She was not supposed to but she did. The calf is black with a long curly winter coat. Big ears low on its head like the cattle indigenous to India.

There is some of that blood line, (Indian, Brahman) around.

Did you know that calves born in cold weather are born with winter coats? They are.

In any case, the calf and cow are doing fine. Not the best time of year to start a life but they are in a protected pasture with a shed and plenty of straw to rest on.

Gail named the calf Christmas.

**The Newsletter that I will send out in January will have all the information you need to order for 2012.**

If you could, just wait until then to place your 2012 order. I haven't started a list or spreadsheet for 2012 yet. Give me a couple weeks to finish 2011 and catch my breath. It has been a busy year. I intend to spend some of the winter days reading and writing.

Gail and I have a road trip or two planned.

By March we'll be excited to get back to farming.

I will send your Newsletter either by post or email as you prefer. Most of you stated a preference last year, which I will follow.

**A Bison Story**

I will send you a story I wrote recently for the Minnesota Bison Association in a separate emessage. It is optional reading.

**Thank you**

Gail and I noticed soon after we began selling our animals directly to consumers, that you, our customers are different.

People who care about their food and how it is raised carry a lot of other positive and wonderful traits.

I love to farm, to improve the land and to raise animals but doing it for you, for people we get to know and for people who care, makes farming so much better.

**Have a great Holiday, Christmas and Hanukah.**

Tom