

2014 Late April Update and a Story

**From:** Tom Barthel  
**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2014 9:16 PM  
**To:** Tom Barthel <Snakeriverfarmer@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** Late April Update and a Story

**Dear Friends, Neighbors and Customers**

There are many short topics to cover.

I will send a separate message soon about **Spring Farm day which is Saturday, May 17<sup>th</sup>**.

**I have been writing a series on Animal Welfare at the Snake River Farm.**

Parts 1 through 7 have been emailed to you in recent months.

I was working on "Part 8, Horses," when spring arrived.

I may not have time to work on the series until next January. The farm year is like that.

Part 9, when it comes will be on Sheep and Goats, Part 10 is planned to be on "Harvesting" but perhaps I will add a Part on Poultry.

In any case, what I am trying to convey is that unless I break a leg or unless we get 40 days and nights of rain, work on the series is probably suspended until winter.

You can find the first seven parts on my daughter Sarah's Blog.

**Sarah's Blog for all recipes, customer letters etc.**

[www.sandhillfarmsarah.wordpress.com](http://www.sandhillfarmsarah.wordpress.com)

Spring is always the busiest time of the farm year.

Fortunately the days are long.

In addition to the seasonal work, I am adding a couple sheds and trying to follow through on the plans I made for pasture interseeding.

We have a few remnant snow piles even after the heavy rains.

Most of you have placed your 2014 orders. Thank you.

We will harvest animals in June for ground beef and ground bison.

Many of you have ordered **June ground beef**.

If you have not ordered, you have not missed out. I will send more information on that topic in May. The ground beef situation is pretty flexible.

I am buying beef animals now for June and fall harvest.

You may have heard that beef cattle numbers are the lowest they have been for sixty years.

Live animal prices are at record highs. Incredibly higher than the record highs of last spring.

I have to buy very carefully to meet our budgets. Yours and mine.

Little pigs are quite scarce also. Fortunately, I arranged for the hogs many months ago.

I am scheduled to bring those piglets home on May 9<sup>th</sup>.

Jim V. sent a link to a story about the shortage of pigs.

<http://www.foxnews.com/health/2014/04/28/killer-virus-spreads-unchecked-through-us/?intcmp=latestnews>

I guess, I am trying to warn you that your 2015 prices will be significantly higher.

Sorry.

**You ordered well over 500 chickens, 40 turkeys and over 50 rabbits.**

We are working hard toward filling those orders.

Last week Ryan, Ashley, Gail and I drove to Aiken to meet with our friends at Wellspring Farms.

The folks there have years of experience raising pastured poultry.

Sarah Kucera and her family will be helping us fill your orders.

I built a chicken trailer some weeks ago and posted a photo on the Farm's facebook page.

**Link to our Facebook page.**

[Snake River Farm Minnesota on Facebook](#)

**I was interviewed by a farm magazine editor at an organic conference in January.**

The article he wrote appeared in "The Land" in early April.

I personally have mixed feelings about the article.

Other people seem to like it, however.

Sarah, has, or very soon will, post it on her blog.

Please read it with the understanding that things are frequently overstated and often out of context in such writings.

**Sarah's Blog for all recipes, customer letters etc.**

[www.sandhillfarmsarah.wordpress.com](http://www.sandhillfarmsarah.wordpress.com)

I attended an event called Ag Awareness Day at the U of M.

Tessa Ganser from **Minnesota Grown** posted a photo of her, a stuffed bison and me on the MN Grown facebook.

I "shared" it on the Snake River Farm facebook page.

**Ryan Straw, who raises some of your beef, pork and now poultry on his farm, is also a talented sketch artist.**

You can see some of his artistic work on the Straw farm facebook page.

He can do custom sketches from your photos.

**Link to Facebook page of Five Straw Farm**

<http://www.facebook.com/fivestrawfarm>

**I wrote a story recently for the MN Buffalo Association journal.**

I have pasted it below.

My eldest daughter, Shannon, suggested that readers who are not farmers might need a prologue to the story.

The story is about a farmer and his dedication to doing his “chores.”

To a farmer, chores are the things that need to be done each day to see to the care and welfare of the animals.

I guess the previous two sentences are the prologue.

You will get it.

Best regards.

Stay warm and dry.

Tom

p.s. Ask if you have questions. I like hearing from you.

## **The Story Follows**

### **“Farmers Are Like That.**

I met him at a grazing conference in Dakota.

He was a big man wearing a cowboy hat, boots and a glass eye.

We struck up a conversation about cattle and grass. He was friendly and likable.

He mentioned having only one good eye. I was curious and I saw that as my opening. I asked what it was like to have only one eye.

He said it took a while to get used to it.

The first time he went to town to get a load of fertilizer, he positioned his trailer under the chute. He then opened the door of his tractor cab and yelled to the plant operator to go ahead and dump.

The operator shook his head, “no.”

The farmer climbed down from the tractor to see what was wrong. The wagon was ten feet from the chute.

He would not have even caught the dust. Distance perception requires two eyes.

I was curious how he lost his eye, so I asked about that too.

He said, one summer he was walking out to do chores when he tripped and fell flat on his face.

It was in an area next to his sheds. He had clipped weeds there the day before with his brush hog.

The weed stems poked him in the face. One eye hurt sharply.

His vision was cloudy. His face was wet beneath the painful eye.

He returned to the house and looked into a mirror. A stem had poked a leak in one eye.

He called the clinic in town and asked what he should do.

They told him to come right in.

But he could not just leave. He had to do chores first.

He did his chores and then drove to town.

At the clinic, they told him the eye was in fact punctured.

The doctor there could not see anything foreign in the eye. It looked like a clean wound.

Punctured eyes were not his specialty, however.

The doctor told him to go to the medical center in Brookings for a thorough examination.

That seemed like a good idea but it was getting late.

The farmer decided to drive to Brookings in the morning after he did chores.

In the morning, he did his chores and then drove to town.

The examination in Brookings went OK.

The doctors there believed the wound would heal and his vision would return to normal eventually. It did not.

The eye became increasingly painful. After a month or two, he returned to Brookings.

In Brookings, they examined the eye again. It was infected.

They told him to go to Sioux Falls to see a specialist.

That seemed like a good idea but it was getting late.

The farmer decided to drive to Sioux Falls in the morning after he did chores.

In the morning, he did his chores and then drove to town.

The examination in Sioux Falls went OK.

The eye was infected but the specialist did not see anything foreign. The specialist prescribed antibiotics.

He said the wound should heal and his vision might return to normal eventually.

It did not.

The eye became increasingly more painful. After a month or two, he returned to Sioux Falls.

The specialist examined the eye again and determined that it was now in bad shape.

This time the specialist believed he detected a piece of foreign material. Possibly a small piece of the puncturing weed stem. The situation was grave. The specialist thought that surgery was necessary and he might not regain sight in the eye.

The farmer was told he should go to the best surgeon with the best equipment possible.

The specialist recommended a renowned ocular surgeon in Minneapolis.

That seemed like a good idea but it was getting late.

The farmer decided to drive to Minneapolis in the morning after he did chores.

In the morning, he did his chores and arranged for a neighbor to do his chores that evening and the next morning.

The farmer reached the Minneapolis surgeon's office mid-afternoon.

The surgeon examined him as soon as possible but by then it was five p.m.

The surgeon explained there was no chance of saving vision in his infected eye.

Surgery was urgently needed in any case to eliminate the source of infection.

The surgeon wanted to operate the following day. It could be done right there in his clinic.

The farmer said, "Why not do it now? I need to get home. I have chores to do."

The surgeon was downcast. He said, "It is Friday, I have been working hard all week and I have a six o'clock T time at my golf club."

The farmer said, "But, I have chores to do."

The surgeon said, "Well, have you had dinner?"

The farmer replied, "Dinner, I haven't even had lunch."

The surgeon said, "Good. You go have dinner and book a room for the night. My staff will prep for surgery and I will meet you back here at 9 p.m."

At 9 p.m., everyone and everything was ready. The farmer asked the surgeon if he got his golf game in.

The doctor responded that he did play nine holes.

The surgery went as expected.

The infection and the infected eye were eliminated.

The farmer made it home for evening chores the following day.

**Farmers are like that."**