

2015 Early June Update

**From:** Tom Barthel <tom@snakeriverfarmmn.com>

**Sent:** Tuesday, June 9, 2015 11:06 PM

**To:** Tom Barthel <tom@snakeriverfarmmn.com>

**Subject:** Early June Update

**Dear Friends, Neighbors and Customers**

I am late with a general farm update but it is very hard to find time to write.

June days are always amazingly long. There is much to do.

The weather has been super for grass.

The cattle, bison, horses and lambs are loving the lush pastures and so are the ducks, geese and chickens.

Geese prefer good grass over grains.

I bought several additional lengths of flexible, woven, electrified fence so we can more easily keep the poultry in fresh pasture.

These new electrified fences are crucial for protection small creatures from predators.

The hogs are doing very well.

The cattle are growing sleek and the 13 young bison we bought this spring have blended into the herd better than any before.

Bison have an extremely strict social order.

Sometimes it takes years for a new animal to fit in.

Some never do.

I do not know exactly why but this year they blended quickly.

A stable social order matters greatly to all the animals.

"Outsiders" live under continuous high stress.

Stress affects their health and growth terrifically.

I think I changed things for the better in the bison herd last winter. I harvested the ornery cow that threatened the horses whenever we drove up with a team.

Yesterday I bought a load of cattle at an auction.

One was a fine looking grey heifer who tried to climb over 8 foot fences repeatedly.

Some animals are angry and want to attack.

I thought this heifer was just afraid.

The sale people and some other farmers thought I was nuts to buy her.

I put her in with my calmed herd late yesterday. Then I spent a little time letting her watch me interact with the other animals.

Animals learn behavior in most of the same ways we do.

Today she is relaxed, has a full belly, and remained calm as I walked a few feet from her.

**June Ground Beef harvest starts Thursday.**

I mentioned that I had  $\frac{1}{4}$  beef for cuts available. Several animals are in uncommonly good condition because of the great grazing.

A\After that letter, about four of you asked for  $\frac{1}{4}$ s so I still have an odd number available.

Let me know if you want to move your Fall order up.

I need to stop with an even number of  $\frac{1}{4}$  in June.

I cannot harvest  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a beef.

**Keith, sent a link to an interesting article by Dr. Mercola.**

I will just paste Keith's note and the link below.

Many of you know Mercola.

Years ago his message was considered wild by many.

He has kept the same message but now he is regarded as some combination of prophet and genius.

Tom

I enjoy your news letters/updates and find them educational.

I saw the attached article from Mercola, a respected MD and natural cures, organic advocate, regarding the bird flu virus. I thought of you and the relevance to your type of operation as opposed to factory farms.

Keep up the good work.

[http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2015/05/19/avian-flu-chicken-cafos.aspx?e\\_cid=20150519Z1\\_DNL\\_art\\_1&utm\\_source=dnl&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=art1&utm\\_campaign=20150519Z1&et\\_cid=DM75199&et\\_rid=958884602](http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2015/05/19/avian-flu-chicken-cafos.aspx?e_cid=20150519Z1_DNL_art_1&utm_source=dnl&utm_medium=email&utm_content=art1&utm_campaign=20150519Z1&et_cid=DM75199&et_rid=958884602)

Thanks,

Keith

I got a nice message recently from a new beef customer. New last Fall.

**She was finding the meat to be tough** but wanted to stick with it. She was considering switching to ground meat only because she was having better luck with that.

Actually, I know there are a few others of you who have made that switch.

All things considered, it might be the best move.

Please do not take offence but cooking grass-fed meat, of all kinds, does take more care. It also takes a more thorough understanding of the cooking process.

This dear customer mentioned that she grilled the steaks for five minutes on each side.

There are many possible variables such as steak thickness and fire temperature but I would guess that five minutes on each side is two to four times the heat those steaks need.

I agree, the steaks would be inedible.

She also mentioned that she had one excellent roast but others were tough and had to be thrown out.

That has to be heartbreaking.

Steaks and other cuts must be cooked slower and for a much shorter time.

If the internal temperature exceeds 155, quality and tenderness go quickly.

It is best to remove the meat from heat at 140 degrees or less. Lean grass-fed meat will continue to cook for several minutes after removal.

It is also important to consider marinating or using mechanical tenderizing before cooking.

Mary Jane Miller, the TV chef, introduced me to a mechanical device called the Jaccard Meat Tenderizer.

It is easy and quick to use.

Rows of small blades cut some of the meat fibers without making the steak mushy.

The Internet says they are \$14.99 at Target.

Roasts can always be cooked tender.

It requires slow and low heat, and moisture.

Keep the meat covered and NEVER let it dry out.

Braising, crock pot cooking, slow cooker, pressure cooking will all yield tender roast.

The proof of that is the fact that slow moist cooking will turn hard collagen to delicious, highly nutritious jelly.

Last week, Gail, cooked a Chuck Roast that we had traded with another customer. The meat was "tougher" than the customer had purchased in prior years.

I think it was.

The customer had asked for a "larger" beef.

Sometimes, not always, larger may be a few months older.  
As the French and top chefs know, "older" grass fed animals are also tastier.  
The "tougher" roast was incredibly delicious. The tough grisly parts were soft and edible, yet the meat was still moist and pink.  
Most of you are happy with the tenderness of your meat. I know that because I gets lots of letters.  
Two beef customers, out of about 250, complained about toughness.  
I assume there are at least a few others who have not complained but even one unhappy customer is too many.  
I am going to try to supply instant read thermometers to those of you who will use them this Fall.  
You may find that a great help.  
We work hard to raise delicious, nutritious meat.  
The animals are young and healthy.  
The cook must put in enough time and effort to cook it correctly.  
Tenderness or toughness is mostly up to you.  
I understand that some of you are so busy that ground meat may in fact be the best choice.  
At least for now.

Gail and I attended the **National Bison Summer (NBA) Conference** recently in Fort Worth.  
You may recall that I am on the NBA Board of Directors.  
My region includes, Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin and Nebraska.  
The 2014 conference was in Branson, MO.  
The year before that, it was in Rapid City, SD.  
The year before that, the conference was in Big Sky, MT.  
I am name dropping here to impress you.  
In 2016, the NBA Summer Conference will be in Elk River, MN.  
During that three day conference, the NBA members will spend the central day here, at Snake River Farm.  
Gail and I are delighted.  
Actually, I find it hard to believe.  
Gail says they will have a great time.  
The NBA members will experience essentially what you experience when you visit us on Farm Days.  
In any case, this is a big deal.  
Best regards and thank you for letting us be your farmers.  
Tom  
p.s. Chicken letter coming soon.  
Chickens are doing fine.