

2015 Late January Update

From: Tom Barthel

Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2015 11:23 AM

To: Tom Barthel (snakeriverfarmer@gmail.com) <snakeriverfarmer@gmail.com>

Subject: Late January 2015 Update

Dear Friends, Neighbors and Customers

January has been mild.

It would be nice to have snow for bobsledding, but I am not going to complain.

I walked some pastures yesterday. Thinking about spring and checking on the buffalo herd.

The sun is noticeably higher. Sunny mornings feel a little like spring.

The first Winter Farm Day is only 23 days away.

I will send a detailed letter about Winter Farm Days in the next week.

The dates are February 21 and March 7, both Saturdays.

Last week Gail and I were in Denver for the National Bison Conference.

I will write a letter about that within the next week also.

Winter has been busy and is going very fast.

There are seminars and conferences to attend virtually every week.

There is a terrific amount to learn.

Mostly new technology and new science that builds on old wisdom.

Not GMO and chemical based, but based on nature.

By farming with the seasons, I have set myself up to take a sabbatical each winter.

The months from April until Christmas are filled with farm work.

From January through March there is very little farm work to be done. I can focus on learning and planning.

I try to attend as many educational events as possible in the winter.

Pretty nice.

Bestselling author, Teresa Marrone, a friend to Tammy visited us a couple weeks ago.

Teresa is commissioned to write a food book, titled "Dishing Up Minnesota". Part of a series.

She and her husband Bruce were here to take photos. She took some awesome shots and allowed me to post one of Bill, our bison bull.

You can see the photo and read more on our facebook page.

[Snake River Farm Minnesota on Facebook](#)

A recent seminar focused on pollinators.

That is a broad topic. We tend to think mostly of honey bees but there are zillions of pollinators and they are crucial in nature.

For the most part, the assignment for farmers like us is to encourage the spread of flowering plants from early spring until late fall.

We do that.

Our pastures and woodlands are filled with flowering plants that feed creatures above and below ground.

Joel Salatin, (America's Best Know Farmer) wrote an article last year that focused on the role of flowering plants.

Technically most of these are "forbs".

Many people think of them as weeds. That is a poor descriptor.

Here is a link to the article by Joel Salatin called "Order Vs. Wildness." [Here is a link](#) to the article that was published in Acres USA.

2015 Orders

Almost 50% of you have placed your 2015 orders. Thank you.

I have an algorithm (simple equations really) on my order entry spreadsheet that predicts total orders. I have used this technique for a number of years and even with only 10 to 20% of orders in, the algorithm accurately predicts total orders for the year.

The reason I mention that is because your orders per family are increasing. It is apparent that you will order almost 20% more than we can produce in 2015.

Frankly, I do not know just how to deal with that. In the past I have scrambled and fill virtually all orders.

Gail is adamant that I cannot increase large animals numbers beyond what we produced in 2014.

There are good reasons for that of course.

The most important might be that we can only raise so many animals and still maintain high animal welfare.

Gail might tell you that there is only so much work that an old farmer should do.

In any case, some of you who order late will not have your orders fill.

Telling you does not change the fact that you will order more than we can produce.

I guess I am just writing this to give you a fair notice.

We are still happily taking orders in all categories now.

My guess is that we will be pretty much sold out for bison, beef and hogs sometime in March.

After that, orders for these large animals will go on a WAITLIST.

Some WAITLISTED orders will probably be filled but ultimately, I will have to learn how to say no.

Sorry.

Next week Gail and I are driving off to Florida to visit kids and grandkids.

Daughter Shan, who lives in Florida, has planned a side trip to the Dry Tortugas National Park.

The Dry Tortugas are small islands in the shallow inner gulf.

That is a boat trip from Key West.

There is an old fort, lots of sand and sun.

Do not be jealous.

We are retired.

Best possible regards.

Tom

