

## **2017 Order Solicitation Letter**

**From:** SNAKE RIVER FARM

**Sent:** Friday, January 6, 2017 3:25 PM

**To:** SNAKE RIVER FARM <[Tom@snakeriverfarmmn.com](mailto:Tom@snakeriverfarmmn.com)>

**Cc:** Barthel, Tom <[snakeriverfarmer@gmail.com](mailto:snakeriverfarmer@gmail.com)>

**Subject:** 2017 Order Solicitation Letter

### **Dear Friends and Customers**

In this letter, I will update you on plans for 2017.

Please read this letter and then place your 2017 order by email.

Early ordering allows me to plan. It also assures that we will have the meat you wish in the fall.

Most of you order by the end of March.

In general, harvest timing will be the same as in previous years.

Prices are unchanged from 2016. (Except, chicken prices may increase pending cost analysis.)

Prices may change for orders placed after March.

**2016 was a good year.** Plentiful rains made 2016 an exceptionally fine year for pasture and land improvement.

You purchased 104 beef animals, 16 bison, 127 hogs, 600 chickens, 48 turkeys, 40 rabbits, 18 geese, and 50 ducks.

I plan to raise roughly the same number of large animals in 2017. But not more.

This year, most of your chickens will be raised by Sarah Gans of Wellspring Farms near Aiken. Sarah has been helping us by some raising chickens for you for three years. I will raise less chickens here at Snake River Farm. Sarah will raise more.

The reason is simply because I want to reduce my work load a little.

If anything, Sarah is a better chicken farmer than I. She raises chickens on pasture using a variation of Joel Salatin's well known "chicken tractor" method.

### **I mentioned above that I want to reduce my work load.**

That leads into a related topic. Each year a number of you ask how long I will continue to farm.

That is a reasonable question.

I will be 71 this farm year. My health is excellent. I can still do a fair day's work and I enjoy doing it.

I intend to care for this farm as long as I am able.

It is however, rational that I reduce my work load a little each year.

I expect to farm at roughly this level for at least five more years. With good help that could be ten years or more.

Fortunately for me and for you, I do have good helpers.

### **Referrals.**

We have 430 active customer families. You reorder at better than a 90% rate. That is quite high. But it does mean we have room for some new customers each year.

As in any business, the best customers come by referral. Your referrals are welcome. Beyond that I do not intend to advertise.

### **Email is by far the best way to communicate with me.**

To order or ask questions, it is best if we simply dialog by email. Please be sure that you communicate a clear decision to order.

### **2016 Farm Events and Visits.**

Three Farm Customer Days are scheduled for 2017. All are on Saturdays. These days are for you. They are not open to the public. You are welcome to bring your family and friends.

I will email details as the days draw near.

These dates are;

**Winter Farm Day is Saturday February 18,**

**Spring Farm Day is Saturday May 20,**

**Fall Farm Day is Saturday September 23,**

Please mark these dates on your calendar.

**No deposit is required with your order.** Just give me your honest estimate of what you want.

**You can change or cancel your order** at any time before harvest. You can cancel or change for any reason.

If you do change your order, please do so as early as possible. The earlier I learn of a change, the easier it is to reschedule.

### **2017 Prices and Ordering Information**

State regulations require that we price bison, beef and hogs by carcass hanging weight.

Poultry and rabbit prices are based on actual package weight.

You prescribe and pay for processing of large animals. Again, that is as required by state regulations.

Poultry and rabbit processing is included in the price. These small animals must be sold whole, dressed and frozen.

#### **Bison**

By the ¼ for cuts \$5.50

By the 1/10<sup>th</sup> for ground meat, \$4.75. (1/10<sup>th</sup> yields 30 pounds of packaged ground bison.)

We will harvest bison for ground in June. If enough orders are placed, I will harvest bison for cuts in June.

We will harvest bison for cuts and for ground in the Fall.

#### **Beef**

By the ¼ for cuts \$3.50

By the 1/8<sup>th</sup> for Roasts. \$3.00. (this yields 35% roasts, 10% stew meat and 55% ground beef)

By the 1/10<sup>th</sup> for ground beef. \$2.75. (1/10<sup>th</sup> yields 30 pounds of packaged ground beef.)

All of the above will be available in June and again in the Fall.

Please specify your timing preference, June or Fall, when your order.

Requests for specific timing in the Fall can be challenging. Early is easy for me. Any time before deer hunting is good. After deer hunting, which is late November gets crowded. Please keep that in mind.

The best for me is if you are able to take your order simply in the "Fall."

Please specify if you have a size preference. You can request smaller, average or larger.

#### **Pork**

By the ½ for normal processing \$2.50 for corn/oat fed pigs, \$2.75 for wheat/oat fed pigs

By the 1/6<sup>th</sup> for ground pork. \$2.50

Hog harvest will be September through December.

Please specify if you have a size preference. You can request smaller, average or larger.

#### **Chickens.**

Whole, frozen chickens, available from June into Fall.

Broad breasted white. To be Determined Soon. Was \$4.00 in 2016

Red Ranger. To be Determined Soon. Was \$4.50 in 2016

**Geese**

Whole, frozen White Emden, available mid-November. \$6.00

**Ducks**

Whole, frozen White Peking, available mid-November. \$5.00

**Turkeys**

Whole, frozen, Broad Breasted and Red Bourbon, available mid-November. \$6.00

**Rabbits**

Frozen, whole, as available, through the year, \$7.00

**About harvest timing and size preferences.**

In general, it is easy to meet your requests for “smaller” or “larger.”

Early is good too. Late can get challenging if too many request “late.”

The harvest seasons do not overlap completely.

In addition, I can only do so much each month.

I try hard to group the more distant orders. For example, whenever possible, I time harvests for St. Paul customers to minimize their driving. Correspondingly, if you live on this side of the metro, your beef and pork are likely to be at different times. Sorry.

I make weekly trips to drop off points in part because many orders cannot be grouped.

Please be as flexible as you can be.

I will do the best job of scheduling that I can.

**Quality Meats in Foley is our processor.**

Bethany and Nick Orton own Quality Meats.

Nancy answers the phone and helps you with your orders.

Nancy is the person who will help you make your processing choices.

She works most Saturday mornings and takes Wednesdays off.

Quality Meats phone # 320 968 7218

**The following letter is an introduction to Snake River Farm.****I often send this Introduction letter to prospective customers.**

It is in many ways redundant to information that I wrote above.

Some of you may find it useful for details of how we raise and sell our animals.

**Our Goals**

To humanely raise and harvest our animals,

To be good stewards of our land,

To grow delicious healthy meat,

To sell that meat at a fair price,

To provide authentic country experiences to our customers.

**The Snake River Farm.**

The Farm consists of 225 acres located in the center of Sherburne County.

We are 50 miles northwest of Minneapolis and 20 miles east of St. Cloud.

The Farm is a mixture of open pasture, native prairie, oak savanna, wet meadow, and lowland.

The Snake River, a small, beautiful stream, winds through the farm for a mile.

We practice rotational grazing and work continuously to improve our soil.

We rotate our herds through the more than fifty pastures, according to the seasons.

We have barns and sheds, a one-room schoolhouse, a museum of farm and household tools, and a playground for kids.

We enjoy using our horses for wagon and bobsled rides as well as farm work.

### **Animals we raise.**

We keep only as many animals as our grazing land can handle.

We raise bison, cattle, hogs, and poultry.

We raise animals only for direct sale to consumer families.

In 2017, we will harvest and sell about 15 bison, 100 beef, and 120 hogs.

We also raise poultry, including chickens, ducks, turkeys, geese, and rabbits

Please see the separate information sheet for details about poultry and rabbits.

We keep ten horses for enjoyment and for farm work. Most of our horses are mustangs.

All of our horses are trained to ride and drive.

All of our animals live in a natural environment.

The animals are in herds or flocks that satisfy their social needs.

Our bison and beef eat only grass and grass hay.

We raise our hogs in large outdoor pasture-lots.

Our hogs are raised on a special mixed diet as suits their nature.

We use only natural feeds which do not contain medications or antibiotics.

Our hog feed is mixed and ground from locally grown grains.

We have no feedlots or handling pens. Our animals have plenty of space at all times.

A typical pasture has both high and low ground, trees for shade and running water.

Our animals are relaxed and healthy.

They grow slowly compared to grain-fed or feedlot-fed animals.

### **How and when we Harvest.**

We harvest our animals humanely. Beef and bison are pasture harvested, on the farm. Pasture harvest, means we kill the animal in the pasture then transport them immediately to Quality Meats in Foley for butchering and processing.

Pasture harvesting eliminates anxiety, stress, and trauma for the animals.

Low stress harvesting also maintains meat taste and quality because the animals are relaxed when they die.

We harvest most of our bison and beef animals from early August until early December.

We harvest some bison and beef in June. The June harvest is primarily for ground meat.

We harvest our hogs from October to December.

Our animals are processed by Quality Meats; Quality Meats is a family owned, state licensed facility.

### **How we sell our Meat.**

We sell bison and beef by the quarter for cuts, by the eighth for roasts and ground beef and by the 1/10<sup>th</sup> for ground meat.

We sell hogs by the half for cuts and by the 1/6<sup>th</sup> for ground pork.

We price our meat based on hanging weight. Hanging weight is the weight of the carcass after the animal is butchered but before the meat is cut, ground, and wrapped.

The folks at Quality Meats in Foley determine the hanging weight on their calibrated scale.

Bison quarters range between 100 and 150 pounds hanging weight.

Beef quarters range from 115 to 190 pounds hanging weight. You can request larger or smaller quarters.

All quarters are mixed. That means all quarters from a given animal are equal. No front or hindquarters.

Hog hanging weight is between 80 and 150 pounds per half. You may request a smaller or larger half.

You tell Quality meats how you want your meat cut and wrapped.

### **How you pay for your meat.**

We do not require a deposit, just your honest intention to purchase the meat.  
We will email an invoice to you immediately after your animal is harvested.  
You should pay that amount to us via check upon receipt of the invoice. Please plan to do so.  
The folks at Quality Meats are very helpful and easy to work with.  
They will process and package your meat according to your instructions.  
You pay us, (Snake River Farm) for the meat and you pay Quality Meats for the processing.

**We work to make this easy and simple for you.**

You are welcome and encouraged to visit the farm. We have Winter, Spring and Fall Customer days, but if those dates are not convenient for you, you are welcome to visit any time we are home.

There is no penalty for changing or cancelling your order but please tell us of a change before we harvest your animal.

We will email a Processing Choices Sheet to you before your animal is harvested.

The Processing Sheet will help you tell the folks at Quality Meats exactly how you want your meat processed and packaged.

Do not be anxious if this is your first time buying meat this way. We are committed to making this easy for you.

A quarter of bison or beef, or a half of hog will require about three cubic feet of freezer space. It will fit easily into a small chest freezer, the kind that sells for around \$200. Gail has one that has been running perfectly in our unheated garage for over ten years.

If necessary, we can help with delivery of your meat. A majority of our customers pick up their packaged meat directly from Quality meats in Foley. Some customers meet me at convenient locations in Albertville, Maple Grove, and Andover for drop off. There is no charge for mutually convenient delivery to those drop off points.

**Our 2017 Prices, (per hanging weight).**

Bison for cuts, by the ¼, \$5.50 per pound.

Beef for cuts, by the ¼, \$3.50 per pound.

Beef for roasts and ground meat, by the 1/8<sup>th</sup>, \$3.00 per pound.

Pork for cuts, by the ½, \$2.50 per pound (or \$2.75 for special oat-wheat diet).

Bison for ground meat only, by the 1/10<sup>th</sup>, \$4.75 per pound.

Beef for ground meat only, by the 1/10<sup>th</sup> \$ 2.75 per pound.

Ground pork by the 1/6<sup>th</sup>, \$2.00 per pound.

**Winter, Spring and Fall Customer Days in 2017.**

Our Winter Farm Day is Saturday, February 18. Bobsledding, lard rendering, soap making etc.

Our Spring Customer Day is Saturday, May 20.

Our Fall Customer Day is Saturday, September 16.

There are picnic areas, a playground, a farm museum, chickens to feed, a furnished one-room schoolhouse and more.

Of course, you will be able to see all the animals up close, including the bison.

On the Customer Days, we hitch the horses to wagons or bobsleds and give rides through the farm.

Please email if you have questions.

[tom@snakeriverfarmmn.com](mailto:tom@snakeriverfarmmn.com)

I seldom use the telephone.

See us on Facebook @ "Snake River Farm Minnesota"

Happy New Year.

Tom