

## **Beatrice and Her Eight Offspring**

On May 8th I posted a photo of the Duroc/Red Wattle sow, Beatrice, with her eight newborn piglets. Those eight pigs have grown. The largest weigh 300 pounds. Beatrice herself has grown. She is over 700 pounds.

I have posted the photo I took in May and a photo I took today.

They had a great summer. It is December now. Their pasture is frozen.

They are still reasonably comfortable sleeping side by side in their shed. But even colder nights are coming. The good times are gone.

This is their last week.

Bison, cattle and horses are designed for Minnesota winters. Pigs are not.

There are no wild or feral pigs in Minnesota. They cannot survive Minnesota winters outside.

Hogs are amazing animals.

They are born in litters. Often as many as twelve.

They grow incredibly fast. From just a pound or two to 300 pounds in eight months.

They are sexually mature at six months.

Their gestation period (pregnancy) is less than four months.

That means a newborn pig can produce a litter before she is one year old.

In many ways they are the most intelligent of farm animals.

Their greed and hunger know no bounds, however.

Pigs are fed mostly grain but they are omnivores and go nuts for meat.

I never feed them flesh. It seems like a bad idea to me.

They do extremely well on pasture and grains on our farm.

In a few days, I will be a pig farmer without pigs.

Next spring, we will start again with a hundred or more young ones.

No doubt Gail will again locate a pregnant sow.

Life is in cycles. Happy Hanukkah. Merry Christmas. Tom



