

Cattle Coming Home for the Winter.

In this photo I am leading the cattle home to the winter pasture.

The herd in the photo consists of 45 animals. Twelve calves born from April to October. Their mother cows. About 20 large and small heifers.

I will harvest 25 more from this herd in November. The few cows that winter over are the heifers that calved in recent months. Their calves need milk to do well through the winter. Calves born in the spring or summer are mature enough to do well on their own.

The winter pasture for the cattle is just north of the farmstead. It is 20 acres with the Snake River running through it. The Snake never freezes so it provides a reliable drinking source for the animals all winter. The pasture has plenty of trees that provide good wind protection for the animals. I will keep good hay in feeders for the cattle at all times.

I like the cattle close so I can see that the young animals are doing well.

The farm is divided into over 50 paddocks. The herd, which reached 100 animals in summer, has been moving from paddock to paddock since spring.

The pastures are done now.

Winter is close.



On Thursday Owen and I moved the herd from the far southwest pasture to the north side of the road. That is only half way home.

Normally I bring them all the way home in one walk. This time, with so many young calves, they needed to stop and rest.

They also needed to regroup. Some of the cows and calves got separated. Several of the calves were born in that southwest pasture. They did not want to leave the only home they have known.

On Friday morning I reuniting hungry calves with anxious cows.

This afternoon I led them the final $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to the winter pasture.

Most farmers drive cattle.

I can too but I do not.

Driving works but it is based on fear. The animal's fear of predators.

I do not know how much difference it makes to the animals but I prefer to lead them.

Most of the time I walk ahead of the herd. On this afternoon I happened to be there with a tractor.

They will follow me equally well if I am walking, on a tractor or driving my pickup.

I just need to call them.

I took the photo from the tractor seat. The 12 calves are mixed in there but out of sight. The herd extends back almost $\frac{1}{4}$ mile and wraps to the right in the distance.

The two nearest cows, the lead cows, are a little thin. They have calves and are milking heavy. In a cow's world, that gives them the status to lead.

The technique for moving the bison herd is much the same.

Bison in fact, cannot be driven. If you try to drive them, they will turn to fight. Then great force and excitement is required.

The major difference in leading bison is that you have to get out of their way.

Once they realize they have the freedom to move, they quickly decide it was their idea in the first place.

They will be running.

Through the growing season I move the cattle to fresh pastures daily.

I move the bison herd less frequently. At three to five-day intervals.

The horse herd of ten, is moved at irregular intervals depending on conditions. The horses are pastured close to the farmstead. That limits the pasture choices.

The technique for moving horses is different. I normally stand at an open gate and call. They come running.

I move hogs to fresh grazing frequently. I do so as often as needed to keep green material in front of them. That is in small increments of perhaps 500 square feet for 30 hogs. I do that by simply moving an electric fence.

Pigs cannot be led. They are not herd animals. They form a familiar group but act in their individual interests.

I stay ahead of the animal's needs but if for some reason I get behind, each species behaves differently.

If the cattle are hungry they will bellow when they see me.

If the horses need pasture, the lead horse will nicker to me.

If the bison believe they should move, Bill the herd bull will stand motionless, scowling at the next gate. He expects me to get the message. Bison will not admit they need anything from me.

If pigs get hungry, they will just dig or break out. Fortunately, that never happens here.

Best regards. Tom