

## **Dutch Belted Cow with One Day old Calf.**

Each spring I buy almost 100 beef calves and yearlings to raise and finish on grass.

The animals I select are hard to find.

Those animals come from many small farms in Minnesota and western Wisconsin.

I buy only females (heifers) because they finish better, younger and smaller than males.

These heifers are supposed to be “open,” which means not pregnant.

Nevertheless, for reasons you can imagine, each year we have one or more unexpected pregnancies.

A black heifer calved in summer.

This Dutch heifer calved yesterday, and a brown heifer will give birth in November.

When a heifer produces a live calf, that event changes it from a heifer to a cow.

That fact also takes the cow out of the fall harvest lineup.

The calf effectively adds a year or two to the cow’s life.

We over-winter the cow-calf pairs and use them to calm and train the new arrivals.

When I bring young animals’ home in the spring, those animals have experienced several very stressful days.

Finding a calm cow and calf in their new home relaxes the new animals incredibly.

Instantly they have leadership.

The young heifers observe the cow to learn where to find water and grass.

Young animals watch their leaders to learn which plants to eat.

They also take cues on how to behave toward me and to come when I call.

### **About Dutch Belted Cattle.**

This breed is hundreds of years old.

The breed originated in Switzerland.

In the 17th century, animals were taken to Belgium.

There they were selectively bred to have the striking white belt.

The Belted animals were originally selected for dairy.

In recent decades, the US breed has been selected for beef production.

They do extremely well on a grass only diet.

This young cow, like all bovine mothers, is on high alert with its new calf.

Notice that her ears are listening intently.

The day after calving, she moved from the herd in an open pasture to this secluded spot in the lowland.

She is a good mother.

The cow and calf will do well.



Gail with the new calf in the prairie.

The cow had hidden the calf in this grass. When the calf is ordered to hide, it will often allow a person to approach and touch it. If the grass is thicker, it can be quite difficult to locate a calf that will not move.

The next morning the cow moved with the calf to a more protected place in the low pasture.

Tom

