Snake River Farm's Hogs of 2021

I have not posted about pigs lately, so I am posting these photos as a season wrap up.
We raised over 150 hogs in 2021.
That is about the same number as in the past years.
Each year I tell Gail that I plan to cut back toward 100 hogs but that never seems to work out.
Demand for pastured pork is high.
I hate to turn our customers down.
Our hogs are raised in five separate paddocks.
Each herd is rotated to a fresh green segment of their paddock at one-to-three-week intervals.
The harvest started in August with 12 hogs going to Quality Meats for processing most Monday mornings.
Thus far 140 have been harvested.
Only eleven smaller pigs remain.
They will go in just before Christmas.
The first photo is of the pigs of the East pasture.
I took this photo about two months ago, well after sunrise.
If they have plenty to eat, hogs will sleep in.

Notice the completely relaxed pig on the right is yawning.
They have a good life.
The yawning pig is a Hampshire. Black with white belt.
The other black pattern, with white spots on the face is Berkshire.
As with other species of farm animals, the "shire" means they originated in England.
The brown pigs are Duroc, an American breed.
The hogs in this East pasture are all purebreds.
As result of the COVID processing disaster of 2020, little pigs were extremely hard to find this spring.
Russ and I drove to Illinois to get these "show pigs".

They were bred to sell to country kids who wanted to show them in the county fair.
It is a painful truth that very few country kids live on farms that actually raise animals.
Most pigs in the US are congregated in confinement units on farm factories.
The ear notches are a numbering code that breeders use like a serial number.
These pigs have snipped tails also.

I hate that, but breeders often notch and snip.
The second photo is pigs in the Northwest pasture.
I was able to buy these hogs in Minnesota.
They came from smaller farms.
Notice their ears and tails are intact.
Same general breeding as the East pasture.
The third photo was taken in June.
The pigs were much smaller then.
These are pigs in the Southwest pasture.
Gail and I drove to Nebraska to buy these animals.

The breeding is again similar except with the addition of “Spots”.
“Spotted” is actually another old English breed.
No ear notching on these, they are crossbreds not suitable for Show Pigs.
The photo shows them just entering a fresh section of greens.
We plant the hog pastures each spring with a combination of over a dozen, grains, brassicas, and legumes.
Brassicas include radishes, turnips, rape, broccoli, mustard and many more tasty plants.
They are literally dining on salad.
We leave them in a segment for one to three weeks.
Until they have eaten virtually everything above and below ground.
Then we move the pigs to a new segment and let the grazed segment regrow.
The left side of the fourth photo is a “regrowth” pasture.
The photo was taken in late October.
This segment had been grazed for three weeks in July.
It was then totally defoliated and brown.
The luxurious sward you see, sprang up from leftover seeds and root particles.

NO reseeding needed.
If you look closely, you can see the single strand of electrified wire that Janelle used to isolate this segment.
When she takes down the wire, the pigs will move from the right to the left segment in minutes.
The fifth photo is of the sow, Big Bertha, and one of her young ones.
Gail had just thrown some plants to them.
Bertha is some combination of Yorkshire, Chester White and Landrace breeding.

Those popular breeds are all white.
Chester pigs were developed in Chester County, PA.
Landrace hogs are Danish.
The sixth photo shows the same piglet deftly holding a cucumber.
Did I mention that these critters live well?
The final photo is of the last remaining pigs on November 21st.
No, they are not segregationists.
They just do not know each other well enough to sleep together.
These pigs are from two different groups.
We just put them together a few days ago.
We did that so I only have one paddock to water.
In November we need to carry water to the pigs a couple times each day.
The outdoor water lines are frozen.
The dark pigs are the six smallest of the NW pigs.
The white pigs are the five that were born to Bertha in June.
These eleven hogs will be with us until nearly Christmas.
Pigs form a “hog pile” for warmth.
As the nights get colder, they will throw modesty to the wind and form one big pile.
We will continue adding straw and hay for bedding, but they have a strong tendency to eat it.
They are pigs, you know.
Tom, Snake River Pig Farmer Emeritus