



Pigs Sleeping in, at 20 Below.

I have posted two photos with this letter. One shows a sow with eleven newborn piglets. That photo was taken and posted on May 12th. You can find the article that went with the picture by scrolling back to May 12 on this Facebook page. There are eleven piglets although you cannot see them all. A sow has two rows of nipples and five of the pigs are on the bottom row.

This article is about the photo that I took of those same pigs yesterday morning. It was 20 below zero. The piglets now weigh between 250 and 320 pounds. The sow, (mom) is still with them. She is on the near side of the photo. She too has grown. She now weights over 400 pounds.

There are ten pigs total in the photo. Two have already been harvested. Can you count ten?

These are the last of 130 pigs that we raised this year. I have been harvesting ten hogs a week since October 3rd. All the other pigs were born in early April. Those pigs were six weeks older than this litter and of a faster growing breed.

This group has a "Spot" mother and a Red Wattle" father. Both Spot and Red Wattle are heritage breeds. The full name for Spots is "Gloucestershire Old Spots." Obviously English.

The Red Wattle breed descended from feral hogs of east Texas.

We keep bison, cattle, and horses through the winter. Those three species are well suited for northern winters.

Pigs are not.

Pig bodies are all wrong for cold weather. No winter coat, pointy little feet, and simple stomachs that need concentrated food.

There are no wild pigs in Minnesota.

Just a month ago, these pigs were able to dig and root in the wet ground. Now, their puddles have turned to ice. Their mud has turned to stone

The pigs in the picture are in a shed open to the south. It catches the winter sun. The pigs have made a warm nest for themselves with sand and straw. By lying close together, they keep each other warm. Their bodies also heat the soil beneath them. They are comfortable as long as they stay in bed. They have plenty of feed. I bring them warm water at least twice a day. If the temperature is above zero, they do pretty well. When it drops below zero, they are exceedingly reluctant to get out of bed. Below zero, the pigs forgo food or water until they get quite needy. This is central Minnesota. The ground will remain frozen like concrete until April. We do our very best to provide a good life and a stress free death for all our animals. They have had a very good life. Next week I will carry through on the second part of that commitment. Best regards. Tom

