

Spring hog pasture seeding 2015. Posted 3/22/15.



Seeding Hog Pastures

In this photo, I am using a hand broadcaster to spread seeds in one of the hog pastures. This type of seeder was commonly used by farmers 100 years ago and more. Before the first pass, I prepared the pasture by using the disc shown in the following photo. The disc leveled the surface somewhat but even more important it mixed and buried the manure and plant remains from last year. In this particular pasture, I made two passes with the seeder. On the first pass, I spread oats, barley, and peas. The oats and barley are cool season (spring) annual grasses. Peas are a cool season legume. Then I disced the field again because these seeds are relatively large and should be buried about an inch deep. I then walked the pasture the field a second time to broadcast a mixture of canola, turnip, radish, mustard, and red clover seeds. These are all small seeds. All cool season broadleaf plants. I plant a mixture of seeds because they are complementary in many ways. We are learning that multiple species have a strong positive effect on soil biology. Good soil biology means better soil, better yields and better animal nutrition. Initially, the oats and barley, which both grow very fast, will dominate. Later, by early summer, when the oat and barley grains mature, the other plant will appear. They will appear almost miraculously and produce edible leaves and roots. The canola will be particularly luxurious late in the summer and into the fall. Go back in this facebook to see some photos of pigs eating delicious canola leaves in November.

I will rotate the pigs through this pasture using easily moveable electric fences. I will give them a fresh segment every few days. The pigs will be in each area for only a short time. Thus allowing most of the plants to survive and regrow for a later rotation. The hogs will enjoy fresh grazing through the entire growing season. On March 20, I planted two of the four pig pastures and one chicken pasture. The 2015 growing season is off to a good start. We will have more cold weather, but these cool season plants can take it. The plants will get the benefit of all the sun and moisture available from now on. The pastures will be ready when the pigs and chickens need them.



Farmall Model A

This Farmall Model A was designed in the 1930's and built in 1945. Gail bought this tractor a couple years ago. We also have a Farmall Model B. My father bought this tractor over 60 years ago. The A and B are almost identical. These tractors were designed specifically by the International Harvester Company to replace a team of horses. There were tractors available in the 1930's but they were large, heavy, clumsy, and too costly for most farmers. Even those farmers who owned a tractor in 1940 kept horses to cultivate crops and make hay. World War II caused a farm labor shortage that accelerated the end of the work horse era. The Farmall A and similar small tractors like the Allis Chalmers and Ford were extremely successful. By the 1950's virtually all of the millions of farm horses were gone. A little known fact is that many of those horses went to feed the starving people of Europe, both during and after WW II.

Between 1920 and 1950, 20 millions horses were replaced by 4 million tractors.

We keep ten horses here at Snake River Farm. We train them to ride and drive. I enjoy using the old A and B, especially the B which I drove countless hours as a boy. Nevertheless, I use horse teams for work whenever I can.



The Ancient Seedbed Packer.

This packer is 100 years old. The packer is a heavy roller that is used after seeds have been broadcast onto the soil surface. It presses the small seeds into the soil surface to improve their chances of germination and growth. This packer was originally designed to be pulled by a team of horses. It has wooden bearings. Many years ago, a farmer cut off the long wooden pole that was used to hitch the horses to the packer and set it up for towing with a tractor. A steel seat was also removed. Farmers made those common modifications to their field implements in the 1940's, as they replaced their horse teams with a small tractor like the A Farmall.

I often use the packer with horses but I then hitch it behind a "forecart." A forecart is a more recent invention that allows the use of implements behind either a tractor or a team of horses. A forecart has a pole, a seat, and a drawbar. Some forecarts even have brakes.



The Old Disc.

This disc is 100 years old. A machine like this is used to prepare and level a seed bed. This disc was originally designed to be pulled by a team of horses. It has wooden bearings. Many years ago, a farmer cut off the long wooden pole that was used to hitch the horses to the packer and set it up for towing with a tractor. A steel seat was also removed. Farmers made those common modifications to their field implements in the 1940's, as they replaced their horse teams with a small tractor like the A Farmall. I often use it with horses but hitch it behind a "forecart" which has a seat and drawbar.



Gail's Selfie

About noon on March 20, I asked Gail to take a photo of me planting a hog pasture.

As always, she was very willing to help.

She unintentionally took this selfie while getting ready for the seeding photo.

Those of you who know her well can easily identify her two wardrobe items.

Yes, mukluks and her blue bathrobe. It was chilly out.