

Title: About Weather, Animal Care and the NBA Summer Conference.

I hope the spring was not too difficult at your place.

We have had the same wet cool weather as most of you, more or less. It has been inconvenient for us but not nearly as troublesome as it has been for many. I hope it has not been too difficult for you. Our farm is mostly sand. This sand does not really get too wet. The rest of the farm is peat and muck. That peaty low ground takes these incredible rainfalls pretty well.

Grass is now our only crop and grass does well with cool and wet.

The calf crop is good too. Eight of our nine bison cows have calved. From the looks of her, I suspect the ninth will calve a little later.

I credit the improved calf crop to Dr. John Bowron. He wrote an article for this newsletter last year concerning the mineral requirements of bison. John told us that meeting the mineral requirements of the bison cows was crucial for good fertility. As a result of the article I switched from block mineral to lose mineral. Because I move my animals a lot, the lose mineral is a little more work but the herds, both bison and cattle eat at least five times as much mineral in the lose form.

Of course the additional mineral costs more but you can buy an awful lot of mineral for the value of one calf.

I believe the animals generally understand their needs better than we do, they should. Buffalo took good care of themselves long before we came along. As near as I can tell, the general principle is to give them choices.

This is only one sample of one small herd. Nevertheless, just knowing that my animals will chose to eat more mineral when given the choice is enough for me.

Along the same lines of giving animals choices, I attended a stock handling course in early June at the 777 Ranch, south of Hermosa, SD. The class was sponsored by Mimi Hillenbrand, owner of the 777 and the Dakota Territory Buffalo Association.

The course was taught by Tina Williams and Richard McConnell. Tina is the daughter of Bud Williams who is famous for his low stress stock handling techniques with cattle.

As you know we have herds of horses, hogs, beef and bison at our Snake River Farm. As near as I can determine, the key to low stress handling is to understand the natural inclinations of the animals and to give them choices based on those inclinations. The choices should coincide with what we want the animals to do or where we want the animals to go.

When we get that part right, things are simple, easy and often quick.

The Summer NBA Conference was at Big Sky, Montana in mid-June. Gail W, I and about thirty other members of the MNBA, attended. An excellent meeting with an excellent turnout.

You should seriously consider attending this event in future years.

On the first day of the meeting I needed to introduce Gail W to our President, Dale Rengstorf.

Gail actually knows Dale well, but he forgot his cowboy hat. I was not sure she would recognize him without it.

Dale tried to blame Beth for bringing the wrong hat but I spoke with her and she declined to accept the charge.

I am with Beth on this one. A man should remember to bring his own hat when traveling. Socks, shorts and tooth brush are another matter.

In case you are wondering, Dale has a perfectly good head of hair. His skull seems to be of normal shape and size. Nothing to hide. He just looks good in his hat.

Best regards and have a fine summer. Tom Barthel