

We bought a new bull for our bison herd on Saturday.

In September we converted our previous bison bull, Bill, into ground bison. Bill had been with us almost ten years. We bought him as a yearling from Blue Mounds State Park. Bill had been an excellent herd sire overall, but during the last two years Bill had gotten just plain ornery. Some bulls get that way as they age.

He was challenging fences and gates. He wrecked a few.

But worse yet he was becoming rough with the younger bison. Normally I would have replaced him earlier, but I dragged my feet for a year or two. I delayed buying a replacement bull because I am phasing out of the farm work, and I was not sure that the next generation was ready for bison handling. They were always willing. After this Fall and the challenges with Bill, I am comfortable that Juan, Janelle, and Ella can farm bison.

The Minnesota Bison Association has a "Show and Sale" every year on Thanksgiving weekend. A Show and Sale means the animals are judged by experts on Friday, and then auctioned on Saturday. It is a great place to get an unrelated bull for our small herd. We have purchased at least seventy-five bison at the Auction over the past two decades, but almost always heifers or cows.

This year we brought home a champion yearling bull and four yearling heifers. Ella did the bidding for us. That Ella did the bidding is not entirely new. We bought six beef animals about a month ago, Janelle did our bidding for those. They need to learn it all.

The new bull is a yearling but weighs almost 1,000 pounds. He is uncommonly poised and calm. He will grow toward 2,000 pounds in a few years. He comes from Griffins Rockie Hill Bison farm near Winona. Our good friends Gail and Dave Griffin may have the best bison herd in Minnesota. Griffin's bison have won them the title "Producer of the Year" thirteen times since 1992.

Our photographer and friend Cindy took many great photos of the previous Bill. I expect she will make even better photos of this new Bill.

He is already strikingly beautiful. Best regards. Tom November 2023

Young Bill standing calmly in our pasture. He already wears a beautiful cape.



At the Auction. Ella is in the upper left, fastidiously taking notes and calculating prices. Blake and Janelle are in the upper right doing the same. An old farmer in the lower right is watching bison enter the sale ring. Gail took this photo.



Ella does chores on Sunday morning. Bill is in the center, a senior cow is in front, a yearling heifer in the distance.

