



## Farm News - April

Scary! It was a close vote. The biotech industry is lobbying hard to get genetically engineered (GE) alfalfa and wheat into Canada. Alfalfa is the main forage for cattle and makes up the bulk of winter feed, especially on our farm. There is little need for GE alfalfa and wheat other than increasing the control these companies have over farmers and our food system. Organic farming has a zero tolerance for GE crops.

Pigs can be hard on clothes! One sunny Sunday afternoon I had some friends visiting so I took them on a tour of the pigs. I wore my brand new \$95 canvas farm coat but with the spring sun shining I took it off and hung it on a pig feeder. That's the last time I thought about my coat until several hours later. Meanwhile, the Berkshire sows must have reached far enough to grab it. No doubt they really enjoyed the coat. I later found my shredded coat become a part of their bedding.

The last fight. Our 18-year trophy bison bull succumbed to his injuries after yet another fight with his younger rival. What to do with a dead, 2000 bison bull? One estimate put the value of his mounted head alone at \$10,000! I considered the option (giving it to the coyotes) and then phoned the taxidermist. He said, "just cut the head off and skin it out!" Yeah right. One week later and I'm still working on it. Not a pleasant job. I'll spare you the details.

It's official - 96 bison. I know that now because every one had to go thru the "squeeze" to be checked for their government tag (law). The bison have a strong dislike for confinement and get quite stressed when handled. It will take awhile to recover and to again trust me enough to come when they are called. "Moostoos! Tatonka! Astum!"

New boar arrives on the farm. Although the rules say it is preferable to use an organic boar, when none are available a conventional one will do. The lucky choice was scheduled for slaughter on the day I bought him from a local Hutterite colony. His first day of life on the farm was pretty tough as he had some important new skills to learn. In hog barns everything is flat and there was no need for him to lift his feet. His new home is outside on pasture with uneven ground. In the barn his water came from metal nipples where he had to raise his head to drink. Here he has a dish and has to lower his head. On the first few tries the water would just run back out of his mouth. Fluffing up straw for bedding is a new skill. In the barn the temperature was regulated so he didn't use any bedding. Perhaps the biggest change was being around people. Commercial barns have automated feeding and water systems. Here I feed and water everyone by hand. He is terrified of people and would run into his shelter every time I got close. To reassure him I would just sit on the pail and talk to him while he ate. It took 10 days before I could even touch him. Perhaps his biggest learning experience is yet to come - the electric fence! Once he learns not to touch the electric fences he will have acres of freedom to roam, lots of girlfriends and a whole new purpose in life.

Jerry