



Farm News - December

Bison are natural grazers and this winter that is exactly what I planned for them to do. Normally I would be feeding them bales but due to the drought conditions over most of the west there is a shortage of hay, especially certified organic hay. The bison have over a thousand acres of forest and meadow lands in which to roam. Bon appetite!

Slow Foods' "Terra Madre Day" shared across the world! December 10th marked the first annual, a special day to celebrate local foods and farmers who grow them. As the number of farmers across the world continue to decline, so does the security of our food system. Naturally, local food a wise choice!

Thirteen years ago we opened our farm to travellers from across the world who participated in the WWOOF program (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms). The volunteer program connects travellers with organic farms. We have had well over a hundred guests but the first WWOOFer was Satoshi from Japan. Thirteen years later, to my surprise a package arrived in the mail, a ceramic bowl made by Satoshi. Along with the gift there was a card. Satoshi said "I was proud to be a part of First Nature Farms. It was one of the greatest experiences of my life".

They started out the size of an egg. On June 6th 09 three small, peeping boxes arrived. Having opened similar boxes each spring for the past 16 years I knew what that meant - turkey season had started. After many, many hours and thousands of kilograms of wheat, peas and oats, the end of the season has arrived. As I reflect over their lives I remember some of the great moments the turkeys and I shared together - the brilliant sunrises, the Trumpeter swans passing overhead, the moves to fresh pasture, Joe the donkey getting into the turkey pen and eating their feed, the kids, friends and neighbours who came by and visited the turkeys. Christmas brings turkey season to a close. Sad? Not really. I know they had a good life and every one of those birds will have a place of honour at a Christmas table. The families and friends that gather will not only be sharing our turkey, they will be sharing our farm, our labours, the fields of other organic farmers, and our good memories. At the end of the meal they'll say "that was good!". And they'll be right - it was good.

Busy time on the farm. Most farmers who grow crops can take some time off when the ground freezes. Not true if you raise animals. The work load actually increases. Straw to the pigs, hauling water, chipping ice, feeding hay, removing twines from bales, getting cold tractors to start, repairs, getting stuck. The colder the weather, the more time we spend outside. This past weekend the thermometer hit -45 C.