

Farm News from November

I had the honour to be selected once again as a delegate to Slow Food's "Terra Madre" in Italy. A great event with 1/4 million visitors reminded me how critical the world's farmers are in the protecting the diversity and security of the global food supply. Food producers from all over brought products unique to their area so sampling took up any spare time when we were not manning the Canada booth.

Travel is great but "there's no place like home" and I was getting anxious to be back on the farm. The last leg of my flight landed me at the Edmonton International Airport. While waiting for luggage I noticed the little beagle going around sniffing all the travellers and I felt relieved when it passed me by. Not that I was a smuggler but I do admit I had a piece of bison jerky in my pocket that I had brought from home. My luggage finally arrived and I was almost through Customs when from across the room the quiet little sniffer dog started barking. Every head turned to see what the commotion was. I saw the dog running, pulling the customs officer behind. Kind of funny to watch. "Someone's in trouble I thought". Trepidation grew as the dog kept getting closer. And then it went straight to my bag. Every eye was on me. The criminal - caught! I hadn't a clue what triggered the reaction but after Customs tore my bag apart they found the incriminating contraband. "Oh! I forgot about that!" I explained. "I got it from a lady from Latvia". "I was going to eat it!" My confession did not appease Customs though. They fined me \$400. for importing garlic. Judging by the dogs reaction, that garlic must have been pretty good stuff.

Now that the cold weather has arrived we sure have been enjoying our new milking parlour. During the summer a family from Switzerland spent 3 weeks on the farm and one of their projects was building a small shed just big enough for Buttercup the milk cow to fit in. In the past we had to sit on a pail and whenever the milk cow moved we had to move the pail. Now with a plywood floor we had a stool with wheels. Nice! And now Buttercup stands higher up on a ramp which reduced the back fatigue from bending over to milk. The 4 walls slowed the frigid winds which would freeze the pinkies during milking. There's even a special window that allows Buttercup to see her calf so the two can moo together while touching noses.

Joe the donkey is around 22 years old and has had a earned his keep as our guard donkey. For years he protected our birds by keeping predators like coyotes from dining on our organic chickens and turkeys. His performance as a guard is starting to slip however. The black fox which I reported in the last news has snatched a few of our laying hens and now the remaining hens have moved into Jack the dog's doghouse and its not eggs the chickens are leaving behind. Poor Jack. Adding to his problems is now Edith the goat likes to pee on his mat. Jack the dog is starting to have a new odour.

Joe doesn't realize the problem he's caused by letting down his guard. He may be getting old but there's life in him yet. This year he fathered 2 new donkeys which brings the donkey count up to 6. Interested in a couple of guard donkeys? Chickens? Maybe a goat? Jerry