

Farm News from December

Christmas is a busy season in Goodfare. Traditions start with our neighbourhood "Christmas Tree Hunt", the first Sunday in December. Neighbours gather around a campfire with their stories, snacks and thermoses of hot cocoa and beverages. After the event each family goes searching the forests for their Christmas tree.

On the solstice we gathered at a friends farm for their annual celebration. Booklets of Christmas songs were passed out. "Don't bother trying to pick one out. We're gonna sing 'em all!" And we did. Great fun!

Our Christmas turkeys (all 10) had their own special event with most receiving an invitation for dinner. They were welcomed by folks from Edmonton, Grande Prairie and Beaverlodge and some even found a nice warm spot here in Goodfare. One celebration that turkey farmers have at Christmas is that the "turkey chores are finished!" Hooray!

Christmas morning was different this year. For the first time my little girl (22) forgot to leave a glass of milk and cookies on the table for Santa. Santa didn't mind since her older brother was making Eggs Benedict for brunch.

We were pretty hungry by the time brunch was served because unlike most homes, our celebrations don't start until after the animal chores are done.

Of course we shared our seasons greetings with all the critters. Joe the donkey along with his two girlfriends and three children had their favourite treat - oats. Six little piles for the six donkeys. Leaving them to

munch we visited Buttercup and her calf. Usually the calf is put away in the evening so we can milk in the morning but on this special day we left "Doug" to nurse all day (meaning we didn't have to milk). Both had treats of oats along with Buttercup's boyfriend "Oreo", the big Galloway bull who is black at each end with a white belt around the middle.

The newly weaned calves were quite cautious when I approached. "Merry Christmas!" I wished as I presented them with their first taste of oats. They were not interested. Maybe they were spooked by the reindeer.

Time to treat the pigs but what do pigs like most? More food! All the pigs received extra rations that day to make sure, like us, their bellies would be full. I was hoping that the "Happy Pigs" would gift us with a new litter of Christmas babies but it looks like they're holding back for New Year's. "Happy Pigs?" They are a group of five sows that were liberated from a commercial barn. The WWOOFers from Virginia, Switzerland and Quebec named the group because those five pigs get along so well with each other and their human caregivers. By the time all the animals were fed it was already afternoon and the Eggs Benedict were ready and appreciated. Local eggs, our own ham, cream from Buttercup.

The Christmas stockings hanging on the log wall were full. Santa must have a keen eye because instead of coal my stocking contained scouring pads for scrubbing pots. Next year I think I'll be the one leaving milk and cookies. Merry Christmas!

Jerry