



Farm News from January

The "travel fund" is finally travelling. For years my daughter has been saving her hard earned dollars for some future adventure and this month she left Canada for the start of her European tour. It took only a few hours for her cheery presence to be missed. The cattle were looking for their hay, the pigs needed new straw, another sow farrowed without her cooing "ah, they're so cute"!

Although her presence is missed (especially by her cats and Edith the goat) we are all happy for her. You can't realize "there's no place like home" unless you've been somewhere else.

Edith the goat has found some new friends. She used to share her time with Jack the dog on the deck of the house (not a good idea if you don't like sweeping Edith pellets off the deck). Since the newly weaned beef calves have moved closer to home Edith has decided that baby bovines make pretty good companions, (although the calves may think differently). Edith likes jumping in their feed trough to lick the salt. Now we're sweeping Edith pellets from the feed trough.

Buttercup, our Jersey milk cow has had some issues this month. When she was milked on a Saturday, she gave eight litres of milk. Two days later she was down to one litre. She wouldn't touch her hay or drink water. When she turned her head from a bucket of oats we knew the situation was

serious. The vet drove out from Beaverlodge and after a long while of stethoscope pondering, poking and probing he concluded "don't know".

He gave her some intravenous electrolytes and some monstrous pills to stimulate the rumen and said "if she doesn't get better by tomorrow, call me". Fortunately for Buttercup she was better the next day and now a week later she's up to about 6 litres per day. One bit of bad news for Buttercup however is that she is not pregnant. We're not sure if the problem is the bull or Buttercup but a milk cow that does not get pregnant is a milk cow that stops giving milk.

All the snow we've had (until the +10 C temperature of last week) was been causing havoc with our electric fences in the pig pastures. Snow is an insulator and when the old boar smells the young females on the other side of the fence, only the possibility of an electric shock helps him keep his desire to himself. The shock from the fence lasts only 3/10,000 of a second but packs a lot of voltage. If there is an accumulation of insulating snow then the shock is reduced to the point that the boar figures the risk is worth it and he goes through the fence. One of this month's projects was to pound in some new ground rods which increased the zap. The plan worked. It probably took 3/10,000 of a second for the boar to decide he wasn't going to try that again. Touching an electric fence is a good way of creating a long term memory. I know.