



Farm News from October

A monster Grizzly Bear has made his presence known in the neighbourhood. Grizzlies are not uncommon in Goodfare since the community borders the wilderness of BC to the west. What was unusual was that this bear killed 10 of my next-door neighbor's pigs. The authorities were called and Fish & Wildlife came out to investigate. They knew the bear - a twenty-five year old male!

Grizzlies have a taste for pork. When the picking is good they don't stop at one. There were stories from years ago on our farm of finding a "stack of pigs", a cache of food for when the hunger returned to the bear.

Should I be worried about my pigs? One bear habit that offers good protection to our stock is that when bears approach a fence, they like to sniff it before crossing. In the case of a barbed wire fence, the sniff proves no danger. I watched a bear go through a barbed wire fence once. Saw and heard the wire stretching as the posts snapped off one at a time before the bear got through. Fortunately for our pigs we do not use barbed wire. We use electric fencing. The first sniff of the humble looking string yields a burst of electricity around 8000 volts (+-), a shock that lasts only 10,000th of a second but a memory that can last a lifetime. (I have many such memories).

Fish and Wildlife set up a bear trap but as far as I know the bear has not been caught. Our neighbours thought they would set up a game camera to see if they could capture an image of the bear. When they reviewed the night's activity instead of finding a bear, the camera captured two cougars.

When we head off to do the chores in the morning we often have the company of Sixty the dog. Sometimes Jack the Wolfhound will

travel part ways just to oversee the daily activity. For the first time however, Edith the goat decided to come along. Not content to just stand and watch she hopped the fence and went right in with the pigs. I was surprised that the pigs didn't seem to mind her being there and when the food hit the trough, they even allowed her to join in. But goats are smart and are creative problem solvers. Rather than waiting for me to pour out the feed and having to take her place among the pigs at the trough, she went right to the source, the feed box. We have several groups of pigs and several feed boxes and by the time the chores were done, Edith had no further interest in eating more grain. For Edith, that was a first.

Buttercup and her new calf Clara are doing fine but along with the increased milk production comes a new problem. Even with making yogurt and cheese and neighbours who milk 3 days a week, our fridge was full with an extra 4 gallon jars of milk. Ice cold, fresh, organic, Jersey milk. Glass of milk anyone? Please!

Our cows spend their summers out on the grazing lease, a 2000 acre expanse of forest and meadows. There the normally mellow bovines have to fend off any wild animals that may consider getting too close to their calves, and they're good at it. A coyote has a hard time running with it's tail between it's legs being chased by several 1200 pound angry moms trying to mash it into the ground. But every year there is one thing that will send the cows bawling at the gate to come home. Snowflakes. We've just had our first snow and sure enough there were the cows. Looks like all are accounted for. Nice job moms! Jerry