



Farm News from March

It was time for a new boar and the lucky guy was Paul (French), a two year old Berkshire. With lots of hay and straw, fresh water and good organic food we thought Paul was living the good life while he acclimatized to his new surroundings. It didn't take long before we started to worry. When we checked on Paul during the morning chores he didn't get up, just laid there. Next morning the same thing. After a few days we became pretty worried. His eyes would be closed and rubbing his snout and calling his name produced only a half opened eye. Fearing for his life a vet administered an antibiotic. No change but still breathing.

Later in the day we checked on Paul and he was up, wandering around. Our excitement was short lived however when the next morning he again appeared near death. That afternoon he was back on his feet looking quite normal. Next morning he wouldn't even open his eyes but once again was normal in the afternoon.

Crazy eh? But we finally figured it out. His problem? Paul's not a morning pig!

Many people have dogs that live in their back yard. We do too but last month we added a bunch of calves. Close to the house the young bovines get used to human contact and learn to come when they are called. "Come Boss" and a little treat of oats soon have them following us everywhere.

There is a "pecking order" among calves with some more dominant than others. There is one critter that dominates the whole herd, Edith the goat. She's the first to water, first to feed and when the calves get a new round bale and start munching from the sides, Edith jumps to the top. Hail to Edith!

Sorting bison is certainly not a stress free job. They are herd animals and do not like to be split apart but weaning is necessary to give the "yet to be born" calves a good start. One year we didn't wean. It was our worst calf crop ever with the previous year's calves taking all the milk. This time we counted 35 calves from 39 bison cows. Some will have to be sold due to a shortage of pasture.

I've found a new role for old "87", a 26 year old cow who missed her last 2 pregnancies. She'll become a grandmother figure to settle the newly weaned calves.

Once the calves are calm we'll move them all to the corral by the house and teach them to come when called. "Moostoos! Tatonka! Astum!" I wonder how they'll like Edith?

The donkeys are pleased with their new pedicure. Finding farriers who trim donkey hooves is not easy nor is convincing the donkeys to go into the trailer. Two times we had to coax them in for their Saturday appointment. Unfortunately the first time upon arriving, I realized that the appointment was for the next Saturday.

Like the wind gusting through tall grass, that's the metaphor I see watching 90 new piglets running free. "Follow me! Let's go! Catch him!" The sea of little black and whites will race off in an unpredictable direction, split, merge together, squeeze together to fit in between sheds, divide again to get around the troughs, amass again and charge up and down the pasture. "Faster! Faster! Do it again!"

When it's snack time they find their moms who flop down to let the energetic piglets settle in for a good nursing. Evenings will find them back in their homes, blanketed in straw, asleep by their mom's bellies.