



Farm News from November

November was a difficult month for pig chores. What started as beautiful soft pasture when the pigs moved in ended up a mud hole within days. Trying to walk became a real challenge. The feed troughs or doors to the shelters were the worst. Mud, mud, mud! There were many rescues of us trying to walk through the mud with buckets of feed or forkfuls of straw and then realizing that if we took another step it would be in our socks. The empty rubber boot would be one step behind - stuck! I wish I had those photos, one foot in the mud the other sock foot in the air, surrounded by pigs. "Help!"

The pigs? They were loving it. We weren't. I was hoping for freezing weather. We got that but not quick enough. The top 3 or 4 inches of sod had frozen but that didn't stop those powerful pig snouts from rooting underneath. The result? Massive plates of upturned sod with deep holes beside them, all through the pastures, now frozen, icy and slippery. Even the tractor was getting stuck. The scary part? Once the ground thaws in spring, it will all return, only wetter.

Expect the unexpected. I thought I was just going to pull out a stuck truck that had gone off the road into the ditch. On route, with tow ropes and chains on my mind I drove past my bison pasture and glanced over. What caught my eye were some dark objects in the frozen dugout. Bison? "Oh no!" 3 of them had broken through the frozen ice, unable to get out but still alive. I started

helplessly at the struggling, drowning animals. What could I do? Ropes? Ladder? Tractor? I ran the rescue scenarios through my mind. They wouldn't work. With desperate eyes bulging, it didn't look like they had much energy left. The water couldn't have been any colder. The ear tag on one bison said "88". My favorite animal! A few years back while she was nursing her own calf "88" had adopted an orphaned calf and nursed them both. What to do!?

I raced back to the house and grabbed my chainsaw. It had gas and it started. Standing on the edge of ice my mind raced. "Will the ice hold me?" "I can't swim." "Will I slip into the same hole as the bison?" "How would I get out?"

The saw cut quickly through the ice and with each piece I pushed the block under the ice with the tip of my saw making a path of open water to the edge of the pond. No towelling off those guys. They ran from the dugout to join the rest of the herd.

Now back to that stuck truck.

We were hauling square bales from my neighbour and had a trailer load. Too late in the day to unload them I fired up the pickup the next morning and driving away noticed framed in my rear view mirror the green bales, a bright blue sky and a brown chicken riding on top of the bales. Nice picture but that chicken probably didn't want to go where the bales were going so we unloaded her by the chicken coup. I was reminded again of that chicken when we were unloading the bales. What did we find? A fresh brown egg! Jerry