



Farm News from January

"Moscow Gets Snowfall of the Century" said the headline - 43 cm. That caught my attention as Goodfare had just received 60 cm of snow. Nowhere near a century record in our neighbourhood but enough to make life on the farm challenging. The cows and bison have no problem, their backs are snowy but that's about it. The pigs plow through the snow, often in a straight line from their shelters to the feed trough.

It's the humans that have the most difficulties, mainly in walking. It's a ½ mile trudge (around 2000 steps) from the house to the pigs. The snow always finds to get inside the boots. Carrying pails becomes really difficult since one has to hold the 13 kg buckets of feed high in the air to keep from spilling them in the snow.

Not only does the snow present challenges, so does the temperature. We have a couple visiting from Brazil. I asked them what was the coldest temperature they had ever experienced they said "one time it got down to +10° C!" When they saw the temperature on our thermometer had dropped to -40.0° C they were questioning their ability to survive. "Mittens, warm dry insulated boots,

togues and a scarf. Regardless of the temperature, the animals still need feeding and we needed to go outside.

Meanwhile, while we're getting ready to head out into the cold, there were two pigs who were getting ready to have babies. I knew they were pregnant but I didn't know what day they were planning to give birth.

Having raised pigs for many years I've had to decide what characteristics to look for when selecting breeding stock. Commercial breeders are looking for fast growth rates, lean carcasses, feed efficiency. I was looking for maternal instincts.

We don't like to disturb the new mothers but when the temperatures warmed up we were able to count the piglets. One sow had 9 and the other



had 11. Two weeks later there were still 20 babies. -40°? No problem! Now that's good mothering.

Jerry