



Farm News - March

Most people are able to plan their holidays - just pick a day and when that day comes - leave. Not so if you're a livestock farmer. In order to go anywhere I have to make sure there are at least two people to look after the animals (and each other). A week before the departure date I had only one confirmed person to stay on the farm (Sebastian from Germany). One person? Trip was off! Then two girls (traveling around the world) said they would come. Great - trip was on! But then their ride fell thru. The trip was off. Then "Andre from Holland" who had spent the previous month with us was unable to go to his next farm and asked if he could stay longer. Perfect! The trip was back on.

All the feed for the pigs had to be mixed in advance (around fifteen tonnes) and bales to the bison and cattle delivered (over 30 tonnes). We managed to get it all done but two days before departure, the ignition switch broke on the water truck. My mechanic said "sorry, big job, no time". That meant we could not bring water to the pigs. Bummer - again the trip was off. With a count down of less than 48 hours before my Grande Prairie flight would whisk me off (prepaid) to my organic tour of Cuba (also prepaid), how could I give it all up because of an ignition switch? Then I managed to take apart the steering column and start the truck with a pair of needle-nose vice grips. Hurray - trip was back on! And that's the way it stayed until the next day when I hopped on the plane to Cuba. Also amazing was the great job everyone did of caring for the farm while I was gone!

And how was Cuba? Very impressive! My son & I had signed up for a tour of the "organic side" of Cuba, organized by Ron Berezan (The Urban Farmer). It was fascinating to see how different the agricultural policies are compared to Canada. Many of the research facilities we visited were geared to helping the common farmer, not industry. Solutions to insect problems were found in nature rather than chemistry. The government would give land to anyone who signed up to be a farmer. Agricultural was encouraged within the city limits and surrounding areas. "Self sufficient" and "sustainable" are the themes of the "new" agriculture. In Canada the ratio of energy used to food energy created is 10:1. In Cuba it is as high as 1:30 !!!

Traffic jam in Goodfare. Since the oil and gas industry has slowed down, so has the industry traffic. Lately I've been seeing about one vehicle every couple of days - nice. So the other morning when I had to deliver pigs at 6 AM, I wasn't expecting any delays. But there I was, 15 km/hr down a lonely country road, not a vehicle in sight, following a moose who refused to move off the road.

New addition to the family - "Jack" the Irish Wolfhound pup. Jack arrived to the farm when he was 8 weeks old, a mere 20 pounds. It's been a few years since we had a little dog around and there's a few puppy traits I had forgotten about. Puppy breath, sharp little teeth (that clamp around your big toe), and the unexpected puddles and sometimes worse. It's been two weeks since Jack arrived. He's doing well and comes when he's called. Jerry