



Farm News - May

Seeing wildlife is always a treat but that kind of depends on the species being seen. My neighbour saw a grizzly bear and her two cubs running across their field. Lucky!

The same neighbour's farm hand stepped into the forest to relieve himself. When he looked up from the ground, staring him in the face, licking his lips was a cougar. Lucky!

When I look up to the sky I would ideally see some dark, heavy looking clouds. The giant raindrops would have me drenched in no time as I ran for shelter. Ah, but this is only a farmer's fantasy. The reality is - no rain. Even in the past week when most of the province received an inch or two, only a few millimetres fell in our neighbourhood, just enough to take the dust away. The past few years have been drier than normal creating a drought situation that has major impacts not only on our ability to produce beef and bison but also for the entire ecosystem that supports us. If no rain falls in the next month I will soon have to make a decision about the pastures: graze it or hay it. I can't do both which would mean the animals could enjoy a summer of grazing but when the fall came there would not be enough to make the hay bales needed for the winter.

Every once in a while we have someone come out to visit who has never been on a farm before. Just the other day an old friend drove out with his son and daughter-in-law for her first farm experience. Just two weeks before, she had given birth to her second child who was also along for the tour. After visiting all the animals we stopped by to glance in at the pregnant pigs just in time to see one sow starting to farrow (pig out or give birth). We watched as the new piglets were born. Almost immediately they were up on their feet and starting to walk through their straw bedding, around the back legs of their mother and then find a teat and start nursing. Amazingly, they can accomplish this feat in just a couple of minutes! By the time the sow had finished farrowing she was mother to twelve new babies.

Joe and his two donkey girlfriends have established their relationship. Jessica and Julia, the kicker and biter, have basically told Joe, "keep away and you'll be fine". Joe has said "OK" although sometimes he becomes overrun with emotion which is quickly extinguished by the response he gets, most of the time. Exciting farm announcements may happen in about a year. The three donkeys have a new role as "mowers of the lawn". A simple one string fence (not electric) keeps them in the areas that need mowing. This "environmentally friendly" lawn mower uses no gas and is simply powered by sunshine and water. Joe is even a "ride em" style!

Jerry