



Farm News from November

If you read the fine print above the opening line that says "Farm News from November" it says "First Nature Farms is a family farm ...". That line hasn't changed for years. We certainly started out as a "family" farm thirty years ago but time goes on, relationships evolve, and children become adults and they leave home. The only part of the family that was left on the farm was me. I started wondering if I should change that line. My now adult children had good jobs and the draw of the bright lights and easy money started pulling them further and further away from farm life. Organic farming is always about planning for the future and I started to wonder if that future would end with a "For Sale" sign but the future is starting to look different.

This fall my son harvested his first barley crop and in his spare time away from his engineering job managed to seed a field of sweet clover and plough up a hundred acres in preparation for spring planting. The future for self sufficiency in grain is starting to look better. This month he announced that as of December first he will be moving his residence back home. Every farmer dad's dream.

Could it get better? Last month my daughter gave up her Edmonton job to accept a more challenging position and made the move back to the farm! The make-up, nail polish and city shoes have been traded in for a pair of coveralls and rubber boots. She was always excellent at working with the animals and her return has been a blessing for all of them and me too.

One change that will happen will appear on the kitchen table. They are both excellent cooks, make fantastic breakfasts and are skilled in Indian and Thai cuisine.

Once again, First Nature Farms is a Family farm.

We might not be the only ones doing some fine dining this winter. Due to a formulation error at my friend's organic flax plant, the pigs will now be enjoying a new addition to their diet: ground flax seed mixed with organic strawberries, raspberries and blueberries. The treat is so tasty that we have some for breakfast every morning with our cereal and smoothies. Some people might think "Yuk! Eating the same food as pigs?" but our pig food is probably much better than most food found in grocery stores. All organic, the wheat, oats, peas, and flax are balanced with vitamins and minerals to make a very nutritious diet. We've even made pancakes from pig food. Note: You wouldn't want to try this with commercial pig food.

The snow has almost reached to tops of the boots but it doesn't slow the pigs down from enjoying the season. They like to follow their same trails through the snow and especially enjoy following the new tracks made by the tractor which packs the snow down in even rows with nice edges, much like humans walking on shovelled sidewalks. Those parallel tractor tracks can get boring after awhile so in random spots they make a new trail through the snow to cross from one tractor track to the other. The result? A new game much like "fox and hound" where they chase each other along the track then make a sharp 90 degree to the next track or try and head them off at the next crossing.

Another favourite pastime is gathering mouthfuls of straw. Expectant mothers do this in preparation for birthing. Others like to add to their bedding. Some just see how much they can fit in their mouths. Sledding? The plastic toboggans the pigs drink from will often get pulled around the pasture. Yesterday I saw a pig carrying a snowball, much to the envy of the others. Another one stole an empty pail from my daughter. "Catch me if you can!" It took about three minutes. Quite a while considering the pig had the disadvantage of not being able to see with the pail in it's mouth.

Jerry