



## Farm News - October

The highlight of my farm day recently has been visiting with one of our Berkshire sows (as yet nameless). If there was such a contest as the "Miss (Mrs) Sow Pageant", she would surely win. Good natured and friendly, she doesn't mind sharing her food nor is she aggressive while trying to establish her place in the "pig pecking order". Mostly black with white highlights, her hair is richly shaded and shiny. Not too fat nor too thin she also sports 16 well formed identical teats. Independent, she carries her own straw into her house and does not have to rely upon humans to do it for her. Just recently she gave birth to 12 perfect little black and white babies with no losses. Babies and mother are all doing fine. Farm work may be hard but the rewards are many.

Good year for the swans which nest across from our pig pastures. The pair of trumpeter swans (worlds largest migratory waterfowl) had 5 cygnets (chicks) this year. 100 years ago the big birds were nearly extinct. First Nature Farms protects over 300 acres of wetlands on 3 different creeks which flow thru our property. The value of this service - priceless.

ConocoPhillips is drilling for gas. Although I was hoping they would just go away, they were able to gain access to our land without a signature or my permission. Not all bad though. Conoco is respecting my organic rules and addressing environmental concerns. The six acres of trees they cut down, rather than being piled and burned where distributed to neighbours for firewood. They also agreed to offset their emissions by funding a local research project which uses municipal waste water to fertilize willows which in turn is harvested to generate electricity.

Barley woes. The swaths are so thick they just won't dry enough to combine. I had seeded both barley and sweet clover as a plowdown crop (a gift to our soil). The sweet clover is a biennial but after the 9 inches of rain in July, grew so well that it was as tall as the barley. When I cut everything down, the green sweet clover wouldn't let the barley dry out. If the barley is not dry enough when I harvest it, it will rot in the bin. That's too bad because I was really counting on the barley as winter feed for pigs. Now I'll have to buy barley while my own lays out in the field.

Jerry