



Farm News from October

Cows come home! I was starting to get a little worried. The cows were gone and the last time I saw them they were 16 km away. That may not seem like a long distance if you're travelling by road but moving cows through the forest is nearly impossible for a non-cowboy like me.

That's where spring training can come in handy. When the calves are weaned I put them in a pasture close to the house. They then get used to seeing people walking along the driveway. Part of the morning chores involves calling them "Come Boss! Come Boss!" I then wander through the pasture with a pail of oats sprinkling a bit on the ground as a treat. Soon I can have the whole herd following me around.

But that was spring and this is fall. The last time I tried to get them home my attempts with the pail yielded only a few "moos". There were those who wanted to follow but the rest of the herd seemed very content where they were. They were going to have to figure it out for themselves which thankfully they did. I went out last week to have another look for them, anticipating a long journey but I didn't have far to go. Just a mile from the house there they were, right where they were supposed to be.

Mystery. A few mornings ago I was walking through a pasture with two WWOOFers visiting from France. Suddenly I felt something on my head and touched my hair, it was wet. I looked at my hand, it was wet. I looked up to the sky, cloudless, no birds, no planes. One girl said she saw it, water falling moments before it hit. We were all puzzled. Maybe it was the pail I was carrying but the pail was dry and dusty.

We talked about it later that evening and could come up with no real explanation. The best one was divine baptism but since I was already baptized it couldn't be that either. Very strange.

I was reminded the other day how dangerous bison can be. The time had come for five bison to be shipped and we started preparations five days in advance of our appointment at the abattoir. Their pasture is a mile long so to get the wild beasts into the back of a trailer is no easy feat.

Having done this many times before I've learned that a bison can go anywhere it wants to go. The trick is to convince them that they want to go.

The time for loading came and we finally had the five in the corrals but one ornery female decided she didn't like another in the same corral so she started charging it and ramming her with her horns. The aggression was extremely violent. We were just inches away on the other side of the fence but there was nothing we could do to stop it. Sadly the bison died from her injuries and rather than becoming food for people, she became food for coyotes and a \$2000 loss for the farm.

Ready for winter? The pigs are. Over the past month we have been moving all of the pigs onto new pasture which is no simple job. The pigs are divided up into several groups with the hogs grouped according to age and the sows according to degree of pregnancy. Every group has it's own feed troughs, fences, water stations, water hoses, hay feeders, shelters and the process of moving it all can take several days.

Once the new pasture is set up on fresh grass with new straw in their shelters (a home most pigs could only dream about), the next job is to move the pigs. How? We make little alleys using wire which run from the old pasture to the new one. We then open up the old pig fence so the pigs can move into the alley and then we wait. Sometimes it takes a day or two for the last stragglers to leave their old home but eventually all the pigs find their way. It will be three or four years before the old pasture will see pigs again. The rest period benefits the soil and reduces the parasite cycle which helps to enable us to raise our pigs organically.