



## Farm News from March

Our neighbor spends two hours a day on a tractor feeding cows. He's not the only one. Firing up the tractor during the winter to feed is a pretty common chore. We used to do the same so I'm familiar with the diesel smoke, the breakdowns and the frozen fingers from cutting the bale twines.

We're feeding the same number of cattle as we used to but with one major difference; we don't use the tractor. As a matter of fact, we fed the cattle for the past 4 months without starting the tractor once. The difference? Bale grazing!

Last fall when we hauled the hay home we placed the bales in a part of the field that had low soil fertility. 10 meters between bales we planned it so with the help of one electric wire we could give the cows 6 - 8 bales at one time. That would last them a few days until we moved the wire to the next row of bales.

Now our labour was down to ½ hour per week, no machines necessary!



Just a pleasant walk. The conventional cattle ranchers

would rebuke "but you waste so much hay!" The problem there is how one defines "waste". Sure there is more hay left on the ground but combined with the gifts left behind from the cows, that piece of ground goes from being depleted to rich, diverse, nutrient dense, healthy soil for many years to come. And no wasting diesel fuel, tractor time and labour.

We've bale grazed for a few years but I've still had to start the tractor, not to feed cows but to feed bison. The problem there is that the bison did not respect the one wire fence, or two wire. Their heads are so hairy they don't get a shock and so they go right through the

fence and wreck all the bales. Until now.

I've always wanted to bale graze the bison the same as we do with the cows and I think I've finally found a good way to control their access to the hay: 3-dimensional fencing. Using 3 wires spaced horizontally, the bison are more concerned with the depth of the fence rather than the height and they're afraid to test it. So far my experiment seems to be working. Maybe next winter I won't need the tractor at all.



What do farmers do in the winter? Pigs can be so destructive. These houses are 30 years old and have been repaired



many times. With the addition of steel skids and steel door framing, I hope to get another 30 years. (maybe for the next generation)



Chatting with my neighbor over the phone she remarked. "I've got the most beautiful pig in the world". I teased "No, I've got the most beautiful pig in the world". This was the conversation that led to the 2021 Pig Pageant. It's just between the two of us (for now) but I'd like to expand the event to include other farmers with their pigs for next year; hopefully to make people more aware of these amazing animals. Similar to other beauty contests there are a few rules and three categories: Face, figure and talent. Judging? You be the judge!

Entry from the Outsider Ranch:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7D\\_X38-mZls](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7D_X38-mZls)

Entry from First Nature Farms:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tDmL\\_w7c3ul](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tDmL_w7c3ul)