



Farm News from January

I've raised a lot of pigs over the past 42 years, usually starting with pregnant sows hoping to raise their piglets. It was always exciting when they gave birth but so disappointing when they lay on their babies. I thought the only way to keep those little pigs alive was to use heat lamps. I built elaborate structures to keep the heat on the babies while preventing the sow from laying on them or knocking over the heat lamps. That was a big concern since a neighbor had lost their entire barn to a fallen heat lamp.

One time I had a mixed breed sow who ignored my birthing set up, bust out of the barn and farrowed outside. She built an elaborate nest of grass and twigs, successfully gave birth and cared for a number of pigs with no help from me. This event changed my way of thinking. Had the instinct of preparing for birthing and caring for piglets disappeared from the modern breeds of pigs? With farrowing crates, instinct was no longer necessary.



Since then our farm has seen hundreds of births and I've tried to select the sows that were the best mothers.

Have my efforts been worth it? Just recently I had a group of five sows who decided to have their babies during our cold snap. With no heat lamps and only the addition of straw, those five sows gave birth to a total of 45 piglets! Healthy, happy and filled with northern vigour, the genetics just keep getting better.

Takin' bacon? For years we have used the professional services of Real Deal Meats in Edmonton to cure and smoke our bacons and hams. Using only sea salt from Brittany,

organic cane sugar from Brazil and natural hickory smoke, the bacons and hams have



always been one of the best sellers. The thief in this photo must have realized it also as he uses a grinder to cut the lock on the cooler.

200 pounds of bacon. Gone!

Making lard is so easy. Just grind or cut up the fat from a pig, heat it and ladle the lard into jars. It's local, organic and if it's from our outdoor pigs, rich in vitamin D. Keeps well too!



Both of our two dogs, Figaro (2 yr) and Magnifico (9 mo) love to show off their treasures. When they run to greet us they usually have something in their mouth: a boot, a rag, maybe a chunk of unknown rotting stuff. The younger one is now larger than the older one but is he top dog yet?



They answered that question the other day when they came to greet me. Figaro carried a huge bone.

The younger dog was proudly showing off his treasure, a potato.

Jerry

