



Farm News from February

Nearly every day I get an alert about someone selling pigs. In the photos, what interests me is not the breed or the price, it's the fence. Pigs are notorious escape artists and it takes quite a fence and a lot of repairs to keep them inside. Once they do get a taste of freedom they'll try harder to escape next time. As a result, the enclosures are built super sturdy, so sturdy that they are difficult to move. Throughout the animals' life they live in the same pen and sometimes for many generations. Flush toilets for pigs have not been invented so the ground level gets higher and higher.

Some farmers try out electric fencing but often without success. "My pigs don't respect it". Yup. I've heard that before. So why can our pig pastures be measured in acres rather than square feet? Because they respect the electric fence. Here's how we do it:

When the pigs are young and ready to be separated we give them a new home filled with straw and an all you can eat buffet.

A paige wire fence keeps them confined but only for a few days. Next we expand their area,



with more paige wire but in one corner we put one electric wire across. Soon they learn "don't touch the wire". After a

few days we remove the paige wire panel from behind the wire so all they see is the one electric wire (like in the photo). Next day we remove the electric wire and all the paige wire. They are free to roam and don't even think about electric fencing until they get to the perimeter of their new pasture. "Oh ya, don't touch the fence".

There is no farm animal closer to the farm family than the family milk cow. Every day, regardless of the temperature, -44 C or +44 C, Zorka our milk cow has been through it all. So have the people who sat beside her as she patiently let anyone, experienced or first timers squeeze the milk from her udder. For many WWOOFers, she was the highlight of their stay. For many neighbours, she was their only source of milk.

"Freshen" is the word used to describe a milk cow that has just calved. From that day forward for the next ten months or so - fresh

milk, and gallons of it. We were so excited when Zorka had her calf, the perfect mother, the perfect calf; a heifer calf too.

Sadly, Zorka was found dead the next morning; a freak accident which broke her neck. Her last act of giving was to provide the colostrum needed to ensure a healthy calf: Zorky, our new friend.



Many neighbours braved the -23 C



temperatures to celebrate Family Day at our fish pond. The menu included homemade sausages and numerous sweet treats. This proud fisherman caught two fish, a brook trout and this beautiful rainbow trout.

One of the highlights of visiting First Nature Farms is the ice cream freezer. Here my grandson is helping to assess the ice cream situation. Looks like we'll be good for the next month or two. Jerry

