



## Farm News - April

It was a long time coming but it looks as if spring might finally be here. A glance out the window reveals piles of snow everywhere, up to six feet where the tractor pushed it. Thoughts of gardening have arrived but reality is pretty distant. Another foot a snow to melt before the frozen soil catches it's first glimpse of the spring sun. The snow is still very deep in the forest and the possibility of flooding is quite likely.

The "one ball wonder bull" continues to remind us of his "pre-beef" days on the farm. Last month the first of his offspring appeared. I named the calf "Shin" after Shin the WWOOFer from Japan who was helping us out on the farm at the time. Since then "Andre" has appeared (Andre was from Holland) and most recently "Roger" was born (Roger from Switzerland). All three calves are doing well and are enjoying their celebrity status.

River otters are back!

"Jack" our new pup certainly has been a pleasure to have around. So far he has not tasted any of our chickens, has ignored the free ranging turkeys, can walk through the herd of calves without chasing them (or being chased) nor has reacted to the herd of buffalo calves which are being weaned near the house. The pup was 21 pounds when he arrived at 8 weeks of age. Now at 14 weeks he is up to 46 pounds.

Tough month for selling pigs. Of all the animals I sell, I raise every one of them so when I have no pigs of market size, I have nothing to sell. This makes it tough on the retailers (my main source of income) who are used to getting product when they want it. But back on the farm, some things are out of my control when raising pigs "the natural way". Breeding times, litter size, weather, growth rate all contribute to the time when the pig is ready for market.

To make matters worse, for some reason the meat inspectors at the plant decided they did not like the look of the black pigmentation on the skin of our Berkshire pigs and started cutting it out. This made the pig really look butchered and our customers didn't like that either.

It's nice to be surprised by the unexpected while feeding the pigs, especially when you look up to see a pair of Sandhill Cranes walking ahead. The cranes have returned to our farm for many years but I am always awed by their presence. To match their long, skinny legs they have a wingspan of up to eight feet!

The largest migratory waterfowl in the world also makes it's home on First Nature Farms - the Trumpeter Swan. With a wingspan of almost 10 feet the birds fly effortlessly between ponds, trumpeting their presence. They are one of the few birds that will turn their heads to look at you as they pass overhead. With a life span of almost 30 years, they must know me pretty well by now. I'm the guy stopped, staring upward with that amazed look on his face.

Jerry