

## Farm News - November

To cross the Rockies with a horse trailer! Should I or shouldn't I?

That's what I kept asking myself when I heard about a group of Berkshire pigs the SPCA had seized on Vancouver Island which now needed new homes. In a way it was something like a "pig lottery". Of all the millions of distressed pigs alive today, there was a chance that just a few might be able to live out their lives with freedom and dignity, and I was the one to make that decision. After four days the 8 winners arrived. A month later, happy, healthy and friendly, they have settled into their new life among peers and friends.

When the tree fell on the fence line last month no one noticed, except the buffalo. It took around 10 days for the first group of 15 to be coaxed home. Everyday I would drive out and try to call them in. "Moostoos! Tatonka! Astum!" Buffalo! Buffalo! Come Here! Then I would sprinkle some oats and hope they would be interested enough to follow me home. Eventually they did leaving nine still on the loose.

With hunting season in full swing there were many reports of the one lone bull. Separate from the herd, perhaps wolves had chased him across the creek and through 2 miles of forest. I'd check on him everyday but he was not interested in following me. Not too sure what to do, he solved my problem by arriving back home, wanting to rejoin his friends.

So now there's 8 on the loose. As I write, they are still out there. Every day or two when time permits, I take the 4x4 or quad out west to try and locate them. Looking for buffalo has become a rather enjoyable pastime. Something like fishing or nature photography, it's an excuse to go exploring and get close to nature. There's been a couple of wary moose I've surprised who should have been relieved that I was not a hunter.

I've slowly been changing the genetics of my pig herd over from the modern breeds to the old world Berkshires. They seem to have better mothering instincts, are hardier and friendlier. One of my last three white sows changed her fate by ending up pregnant so I moved her to her own little house, filled it with straw and waited. The morning came when she gave birth. Fourteen! Three weeks later she still has thirteen healthy, plump piglets running around. I guess she's changed her fate again. Definitely a keeper!

Joe the donkey is an "intact" male (called a "Jack") who works on the farm as a security guard for our chickens and turkeys. In his life he has had only one lady friend and that was "Chevelle", the horse. She never did care for his moods and would kick him when he approached too close. Poor Joe, never had a real girlfriend. That all changed when I responded to an ad on Kijiji and came home with 2 Jennys (female donkeys). We all had comments predicting Joe's reaction but did not expect what happened. Rather than wanting to meet his new companions, Joe broke through his fence and ran away! It took us two days to get him back! Could it be?.....Joe (?) Jerry