

# Gus's Farm

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2022

Website: [www.gusfarmnh.com](http://www.gusfarmnh.com)



## Land of Missed Opportunities

I grow frustrated with our national conversations being solely focused on problems. Discussions with unlimited repetition and intensity stopping only at the point of viable or even tangential solutions. So here I go, a dumb grunt pig farming truck driver. Like a caveman striking rocks to hopefully spark tinder and ignite the flame of progress, innovation, and collaboration among those tolerant and patient enough to read my newsletters. Please understand, what I'm about to write will not become the norm for newsletters; I still have lots of farm and children specific anecdotes to share every day. Nor is the following designed to be a one size fits all fully thought out policy agenda. It's just a combination of other's and mine experiences and observations.

Fuel. I think we can all be grateful the increase in fuel prices comes at a time when we don't need to heat our homes. That time is certainly coming and I can't help notice in all my driving the wasted resource our nation's forests are. I'm in no way advocating for clear cutting or abolishing conservation protections, I'm just happy to point out that forests are no different than an apple tree in that to thrive they must be pruned, albeit responsibly.

But let's think, if every highway median was managed with the intensity of an orchard. If we developed a "common cord" plan where students could get biology or physical education credits for how many cords of wood they harvested by hand on the acres and acres of available land between highways, industrial lots, unused private land (with permission) and even conservation areas. It could be under the strict cutting directions of educated foresters or summer work seeking teachers. Maybe as the students came of age they even learned to use chain saws. Even skidders. Or those interested in horses had opportunities to skid logs with them. I can't help but notice the impressive fleets of DOT and DPW vehicles and equipment largely sit idle on weekends, afternoons, and holidays. This program wouldn't be mandatory it would be optional. So what's the point of having stacks of cordwood with nowhere to burn it? Well... in Massachusetts they have a rigid title 5 inspections for septic systems, perhaps we implement something similar as safety code for wood burning stoves. Perhaps we implement laws or incentives to give wood burning heat sources a tax break, with the stringent safety regulations in place. I know some may think they are dangerous but might I remind you the Merrimack Valley being on fire from natural gas system failures? Yes the smoke is unsightly and carbon emitting but at least the future fuel source (growing trees) can make use of that carbon and is renewable. May I ask, how much smoke is emitted from war driven by fossil fuel needs?

Additionally, I can't think of many things more elevating to the lower socio economic classes than having the chance to work/pay cheap to heat their home. To not be tethered by the patriotic duties willed upon us with increased fuel prices. I recall how the ice storm of 2008 was a boon to those with a chainsaw (gas powered and not reliant on the grid for a charge) and a wood stove at home. Juxtaposed with those without power, tools, or a means to burn wood it was devastating.

So by now you must be convinced, ensuring the opportunities for Americans to source their own heat ([over 10% of our petroleum use](#)) while improving the health of the forests. Now, as a farmer working toward silvopasture (imagine the savanna, with tall grasses growing with scattered trees supporting lots of life) I see another opportunity. The opportunity to graze animals on these same highway medians and public campuses and cul-de-sac common areas is almost too exciting to handle. Imagine if we made the guardrails a little taller? Or we valued **quality** food security as much as sleeping in on Saturdays in our condos along Route 128 and found funding for 14' walls along these areas (our beef herd is kept in with fences less than four feet by the way) or even offered long-term leases for farmers to fence in these lands themselves. I bet people would be happy to see animals all around them on the way to and from work.

Again, it could absolutely be managed in a land benefiting way. Sure, I get it, people might be nervous about hitting a cow while they are texting and driving. They may say the wall or fence is too expensive and tick-tock too addicting to give up while they drive. Fine. Even if we just instead of paying state salaries to use brand new John Deere's to only mow, we had them bale the grasses for farm use. Or urban farming mulching. Or again, offered a lease to other farmers. Sure, it would have some trash and the occasional mafia victim remains in it (organ matter is organic matter) but if we had more people, our students, taking ownership and actively working the land, I bet there would be less littering. Can't you imagine it? Even Tony-Too Cool for Trashcans saying, "Hey, don't throw that out, my kid logs that strip!" I definitely don't advocate for state mandated labor camps, I advocate for more opportunities for individuals to maximize (sustainably) our public and private resources. If grass fed beef and lamb are properly managed these acres would be sequestering carbon and we could follow states like Wyoming and Montana that offer carbon credits for such things. Perhaps those credits could offset lease costs as an Incentive to properly manage land.

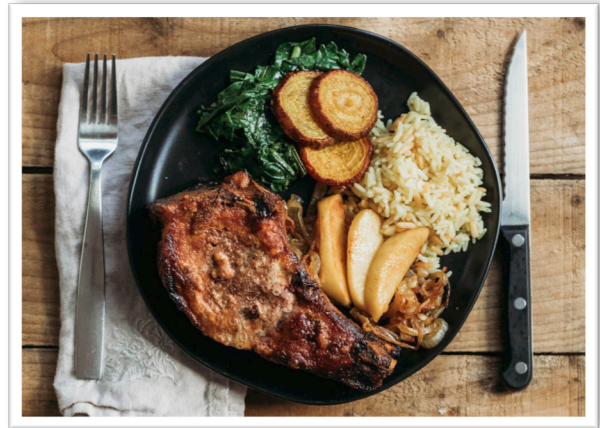
I was recently in a development in Shirley, MA that had more acres in lawn (also known as underutilized pasture) than all four farms I manage combined. Imagine if the social norm was to lease it to the neighborhood kids who had a small dairy or beef herd they moved every day. Imagine if the weirdo was the perfectly manicured and poisoned (sprays) lawn and not the one with chickens and fruit trees. Imagine if every year the development had a big block party celebrating their connection to nature by grilling one of the animals their children raise. Exchanging stories of how Betsy the cow ate Mrs. Robinson's flowers or whatever. Growing community, quality food, soil, and a greater connection with the life and death cycle to help build resilience for coping with the next pandemic or disaster (we can't stop them but we can prepare for them). Sure, if you don't want to you shouldn't have to let teenagers put beef on your lawn. I just don't think you should be allowed to tell other people they can't. Maybe I'm the weird one for considering HOAs a step closer to North Korea tyranny than an idealistic suburban lifestyle to maintain property value at all costs, Food access be damned. \*Sarcastic shoulder shrug\*

And then most recently we see the unconscionable and unbelievable display of corporate greed, regulatory failure, and danger of dependence on our current food system: the recent formula shortage. Let me add another disclaimer here, in no way do I believe feeding breast milk or formula is the measure of your parenting. However, I can't help but see this crisis as yet another opportunity to improve. Perhaps someone more qualified...maybe someone with breasts and/ or a degree... can launch a new campaign for educating young women on breastfeeding. Not because it's a better option but because it's a more affordable option and one that doesn't tie mothers...and more importantly their infants...to the volatility of our global food markets, chains, and greed.

Perhaps it's an opportunity to continue the conversation I heard [NPR](#) host years ago, about the racial stigmas against breast-feeding—an echo of slavery and wet-nursing for sure. Let's address it. Let's make all information known. Because if there's even one...literally just one mom and infant...who was lacking a piece of information or a voice of support for her to choose breast feeding...and it would have prevented just one single moment of hunger for an infant.... then it's worth all the airtime, news Channel ticker space, and space on this newsletter.

I see no use in discussing problems and stopping shy of solutions. I see no use in waiting for someone else's solutions. I believe in creating them, supporting them, trying them, and reworking them. I believe as a nation, a state, a community, a household, and an individual: we need to normalize independence, not idolize dependence. If we all can rely on ourselves then we can all rely on each other when it's needed.

P.S. - We have a lot of sausage in the freezers and grass-fed beef has finally been restocked.



Grass-fed beef and pork chops back in stock!

Photo credit: Pamela Hart Photography

[www.pamelahartphotography.com](http://www.pamelahartphotography.com)

# Current Inventory

Chorizo Sausage Links.....	\$8.50/lb.
Bratwurst Sausage.....	\$8.50/lb.
Kielbasa Sausage Links.....	\$8.50/lb.
Sweet Italian Sausage .....	\$8.50/lb.
Breakfast Sausage.....	\$8.50/lb.
Ground French Apple Sausage.....	\$8.50/lb.
Ground Pork.....	\$8.50/lb.
Bacon.....	\$11.00/lb.
<b>*Pork Chops.....</b>	<b>\$9.50/lb.</b>
<b>*Grass-Fed Ground Beef.....</b>	<b>\$9.00/lb.</b>

**\*Beef Brisket, Beef Rib Roasts, Beef Kabobs, Beef Tenderloin, & Different Cuts of Steaks etc. (Email for details- limited supply)**

**\* Newly stocked items fresh this week**

**\* Place your order via email today**