



Holiday Newsletter 2022

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Bloody Truth

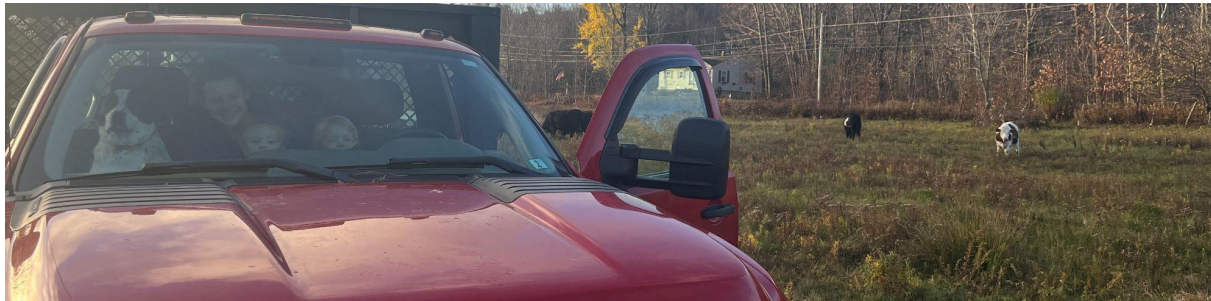
It was so warm this November that my neighbor and I decided to hay another neighbor's field. In true yankee farming fashion we had about as many breakdowns as bales of hay. In fact, it took a fourth neighbor's baler to finish the job before, a long overdue but nonetheless untimely, rain. I have little haying experience so it was fun to have low stakes practice at it. (Any hay cut in November is an unexpected benefit.) Melissa and the kids even joined me to turn...and loose...wrenches during the many pulley adjustments or bolt replacements. The kids had fun running through the field and playing with...and then fighting over... and then again losing the wrenches not in my hand. Good times, even better when you bring an adjustable...and hold on to it.

A little early this year, we moved the herd back home to their winter area and began feeding hay. I made the decision to have them where frost free water and quality fence was in case any hard freezes or heavy snows came. In truth I have felt a little mocked by the warm weather that has continued! The final load and driving of the herd is bittersweet. It's rewarding to have a herd so accustomed to fences and trailers walk on so well, it's refreshing to know chores will be within walking distance for the next few months. (We pasture several properties a few minutes drive away that we graze all summer). It's most rewarding and relaxing to see them drinking from an automatic freeze resistant trough we installed this summer (fingers crossed it keeps working) in a fence we built over a few years, around a paddock that improves each year as we rotate different species and thin the trees. Also, I'm a fan of hearing them below and moo behind our house. The winter herd will remain around 10. Having bought a few cows, finished a couple off, and our friend Naaman's Jersey heifer is now home. She's expected to give birth and begin milking this December. We are as eager to see the cute calf as we are to enjoy the fresh raw milk.



Left: If you look close this old mower has new hoses, belts, bolts and more!

Right: Naaman's heifer is skeptical when I tell her that the toilet float used on the frost free trough was brand new.



The whole family joins me for the last day of watering cows away from home in 2022.

A cow and a heifer, both of which we had grazed and loved for the better part of a year, had their last day on our farm this month. Their day was spent as all those previous had been, in fresh air, on pasture, licking minerals and sipping clean water in between chewing cud. Among their fellow bovines, birds and squirrels. They enjoyed the afternoon sun on the southern slope of their paddocks knoll, and then they saw their farmer with an odd looking stick and it was over. We then hooked the carcass up to the tractor and began dressing it to bring it to a local butcher who does custom meat cutting.

Don't mistake my preference for on farm kills as a preference for killing. Moving the cows to thrive on fresh grass will always be my favorite moment in farming. I've read that 70% of people,

if given the choice, would prefer to die at home. At the risk of anthropomorphising our animals, I imagine if given the choice she'd prefer to die at home as well. Similar to burning wood, and reducing oil consumption, I like that I'm not outsourcing the dirty work of my comfortable existence to some far away, and lower income, person to deal with. (Rich neighborhoods aren't adjacent to power plants and their residents don't work at slaughterhouses.) The maximum amount of nutrients (blood, guts, hide) stay on the farm to compost and ultimately go back into the fields the cow got her last meal from. I enjoy the challenge of partaking in a whole new craft and skill of butchering. I enjoy the tribal comradery that comes as neighbors and friends pull up my driveway with a knife and a sharpener and start helping. I enjoy the honesty I feel with myself, the herd, and the customers after the fact, when I know I was there for almost (I didn't partake in the actual cutting of steaks or the birth for these two) the entire process. I also feel a great benefit in monitoring the reverence of the animal throughout it's final form. Respecting the entire carcass is to respect the entire life of the animal. To grow intimate with death is to grow appreciative of life. It inspires me to make sure every inch of land we have the opportunity to manage is done so properly. Where every blade of grass and grove of trees is honoring the circle of life and contributing to a more abundant planet. The bloody truth is that one cows death nourished my family and our friends, provided billions of organisms and bacteria a place to create compost, fertilized untold numbers of seeds, which through the absolute magic of photosynthesis gave life yet again in the form of oxygen and food for the cow's fellow cows. All the while filtering water runoff to cleanly quench the thirst of both the farmer and the cow, and the rest of the ecosystem.



Naaman helped out big time as we harvested these most recent two ourselves

We hope you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving and that your Christmas will be Merry!

May your hugs be long and tight and your travels quick and safe!



Pamela Hart takes amazing photos, this one is of one of our pasture raised turkeys from last year.
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