



## Farm News from December

Trumpeter swans in December? It was an unexpected site to see the juvenile swan flying around the pig pasture. The young swan's folks must have left a couple of months ago. I called Fish & Wildlife to see if there was anything I could do. "If you catch it we'll fly it down south". "That's nice" but easier said than done. I keep looking. I could imagine crawling through the snow trying to reach for it's feet. Their wingspan can reach 10 feet. I had visions of flying through the air, hanging on to the legs of the startled swan. I'm sure I would have received second looks if I would have passed Santa.

Turkey season is over much to my relief. Being a turkey farmer at Christmas is no simple matter. Starting from mid-June when the birds hatched we cared for them every day, mixing their organic feed and filling their feeders, making sure they had clean water to drink. Every couple of days you could notice they had grown. For every 3 buckets of feed you carry in to them you can expect to carry out one "bucket" of turkey. Very efficient birds. Our largest was over 45 pounds. This is the last year we will be able to grow the festive sized turkeys. The only one plant left that will custom process the birds has announced they will no longer accept birds over 30 pounds.

It's official. Our new Belted Galloway bull has been named - "Randy"

December had a new unexpected twist. The bison yearlings I was grazing at my neighbour's farm for the summer refused to be caught. Last year I just opened the gate and let them find their way home. That didn't work as planned since they took a wrong turn and got

into the community pasture that also contained several hundred cows. It's pretty hard to chase bison and not disturb the cows. We eventually got them home but I decided next year I would just load them in the stock trailer for the 4 mile drive home.

Corralling bison is not a simple matter. They prefer the open fields and even though their delicious hay was in the corral, when they saw a human approaching they would race back to the field. I had to build some remote gate closing systems involving ropes and pulleys. To be sure that when they were captured they did not wreck my neighbour's corrals we had to cover all the gates with black tarps. After about 3 weeks of trying the moment came. They were where we wanted them and with one pull of the rope they were caught. The next job was getting them on the trailer. "This could take 30 seconds or it could take a lifetime" I told my nervous helpers. Within minutes they were loaded and on their way home. A big relief for me. Cross that one off the list.

Christmas on the farm was a peaceful time. The fresh flakes of falling snow nestled on the branches of the trees and the temperature reached a balmy -12 C. Clara the milk cow's calf got to nurse all day long since we did not separate the two for the morning milking. The pigs all had fresh straw which is about the nicest treat you can give to a pig (other than food). The donkeys were gifted with oats. The few laying hens we have gave us a gift of 5 eggs. We lost our old cat Purr (18) but gained a new pet - Kanye. He's a rabbit. The little bunny was found abandoned on the steel arm of a bale moving truck. He's a house pet for now and has also shared the Christmas season, gifting us with little rabbit pellets. Jerry