



Farm News from February

I was thinking of spring when the fluorescent orange gloves caught my attention, as did the store's "Sale!" sign. Spring is when we start to move all the pigs, their houses, their fences, their feeders, and all their stuff onto fresh, new pastures. Along with the job comes the "pig smell" which once on your hands can take days to wash away. These gloves were waterproof looking and fuzzy on the inside which meant they might work well for a February spring. 6 pairs and a couple hours later I was home and the new fluorescent gloves instantly caught the attention of the WWOOFers.

One may wonder why I would even consider mentioning new gloves in the Farm News but those gloves had an unexpected benefit. They were so bright that the wearer could be seen at great distances. I could not see the people but I could see their gloves. Through the trees I could tell if fence repairs were still in progress or a half a mile away I could see if the pig chores were done. They took the guess work of trying to locate someone for lunch. These fluorescent gloves worked like a low tech equivalent of a GPS locator. We have no cell reception where we live but now who needs it? Hand signals! It's the new thing!

Our family farm is missing a good part of the family these days. Our right hand woman, (feed mixer, animal care provider, chef, kombucha maker, festivity organizer, smile initiator and friend of all) is off traveling to Central America. We are missing her!

Something's happened and I don't know what. For some reason the group of sows who should have been farrowing now are showing no signs of being pregnant. Pregnancy is a pretty important part of raising animals. Could the problem be the boar (Curley) or the sows? Something in the feed or something in the air? Age related or weather related? All are possibilities. The consequences may be serious. No pregnancies means no pigs which means no pork which means no income. Fortunately I have some organic friends with some extra piglets which will help make up the shortfall.

Next on the list of purchases may be an ultrasound made for swine. The new tool would then tell us who is pregnant and who is not.

There is an unplanned benefit for the pigs from the ultrasound testing. Most sows would not take kindly to having a cold prod rubbing against their bellies so we have to condition them. This involves getting them all used to having their bellies rubbed. Belly rubbing (50 sows) has become the new part of the morning chores. Rather than just feeding the pigs we now have to rub their backs, then their sides and slowly work down to their belly. Some pigs already appreciate a good belly rub. It's the ones that don't that we have to work on. Oh well, there can be worse jobs on a farm but I'll leave those stories untold, for now.

Breaking News: Buttercup is pregnant! The new bull Randy can chalk up another, 40/41!