

Howde Family Farm

April 1, 2008

Dear Friends,

Anyone want some snow? We are in the midst of a near record breaking winter in regards to snow. One more inch and we will top the most for this area on record. On April 1st we have 21.5 inches on the ground. On top of all that we are expected to get another snowfall on Friday. All of the animals and people around here are anxiously awaiting spring.



(photos taken April 1, 2008)

We have some exciting changes taking place. We are switching to all home delivery beginning in July. We will continue to do two deliveries per month, one for the Arlington area (Woburn, Winchester, Medford, Somerville, Cambridge, Lexington, and Arlington) on Tuesday and one for the Melrose area (Andover, Reading, Wakefield, Stoneham, Malden, and Melrose) on Thursday. Jeff will start the deliveries at 4 p.m. until the time changes in the fall. At that time he will deliver earlier so he can get done before dark. Home deliveries allow us to cover more towns in the same number of trips. We will send a notice reminding of the coming delivery a couple days ahead of time.

Another change taking place will be a limit of 70 members total. We want to stay small so we can continue to offer the same level of service to our members. At the same time, 70 members represent a level of efficiency in our deliveries that will enable us to keep our rates the same through 2008. One of the things that have been well utilized is the “extras”. We will continue to offer extras as a way for members to customize (after their regular share) to suit their eating habits. We will not be offering steak or chops as extras but will offer roasts when they are available. There has been much interest in jowls, pigs feet, and fresh pork belly. We will meet all requests as we are able.

There has not been much beef in the shares lately. We are almost through a large group of hogs that we started raising last fall. We need to balance everything so that we utilize every animal at its best. The hogs are ready now, soon we will have 3 veal ready, then we will have some steers ready starting in June. We continue to attempt to balance our animals so we can have an even supply. There is also limited freezer space, partly because we want to deliver the meats fresh not store them for long periods.

I recently visited a farmer I have known for several years. He is raising organic 100% grass fed Angus beef. His system is exactly how I would envision running such an operation. He takes very good care of his animals without the use of any antibiotics or hormones. They are also very healthy. I am telling you all this because we will occasionally buy animals from him to better balance our own supply. The economy in this area doesn't give him much of a market. We haven't bought animals to balance our supply before, but this is a chance to help a fellow local farmer and get a quality product in return.

Some members are against veal in their shares. We now offer no-veal shares. If you are a current member and want to opt out of the veal, please send us an e-mail.

If anyone would be willing to submit their favorite recipe for meat from us, we would like to put some on our website. Recipes for jowls, pigs feet, fresh hams, and other less utilized parts or cuts would be especially helpful. Please keep checking our website for new updates. We will change it at least twice per year to reflect the seasons. Also, the new sign-up form for the second half of 2008 will be on the website soon. There are a few changes to that as well.

A member sent us a copy of an article from The New Yorker about three chef/authors that have a different opinion about the modern meat industry. They all stress how to use all the parts of an animal and knowing where and how your meat is raised. One line that really struck me was how you should know the first name of the person that raises your meat. I think that the deeper meaning isn't that you know our first names, but that you know and trust us to only give you top quality meats that are good and good for you. Tina and I hope that is true for all of our members. We would like to invite you to come see the farm and animals. Please call or e-mail ahead of time so we can be sure that someone will be here to show you around and answer questions.



J e f f a l o n g s i d e D a v i d & T i n a H o u d e F a m i l y

We are gearing up for summer (we don't think that we are going to have spring here). Tina has ordered chicks, the cows are getting spring fever, and the sows are getting ready to have their babies. We saw a robin the other day but I think it went south for the summer. The children have some vegetable plants started in case we get to plant them. I have ordered seed for our fields. The new growing season holds much promise. It is all kind of exciting entering into a very busy but enjoyable time of the year.

I can't promise a regular newsletter but I will try to put one out at least two or three times per year.

Sincerely,
David & Tina Houde
Houde Family Farm