



Snug Valley Farm
East Hardwick, VT

The days are growing longer, this week we saw the sun shining and the skies have been a beautiful shade of blue in the Northeast Kingdom. With that comes a ton of on-farm work added onto regular feeding, cleaning and handling of livestock. We've started spreading manure on the fields so we can get those nutrients built up throughout the winter onto the fields so we can grow incredible grass while building soil health on the farm. Normally we have my husband Ben working full-time at the farm, plus a full-time farm hand and a part-time high school student that helps out with animal chores as well as Ben's dad Helm and mom Nancy running errands (meat deliveries and pickups) and taking care of farm odds and ends.

Due to our commitment to limiting exposure of COVID-19 to our family and our customers, we decided to put our farm-hand hiring on hold, have asked the high school student to stay home and stay safe during this time, and Ben is the only person leaving the farm when absolutely necessary.

That means more work for our family but it's the right choice. If we spend our days on the farm, we'd never know what's going on in the outside world and I think this could be the case for a lot of farmers in the springtime and summer months. Over the weekend Nancy was able to get outside and start gardening and Helm has been really great with packing customer orders. Everyone's feeling a bit cooped

up but hopefully being able to get outside a bit will help us better adapt to this new normal.

Retail/Grocers

For our retail grocery accounts, our sales are holding steady with last week. I feel like our sales to retail outlets after increasing over the past weeks are now still increased from before but leveling off as we suspected would happen as people get stocked up on grass-fed beef and pasture raised pork products. A freezer can hold only so much local meat. As people eat through their stockpiles, I think sales will continue to be elevated. Based on the reports and articles I've been reading for the national food system, I think customers will continue to select local products and if packing houses in states hard hit by COVID-19 close, there could be a slow in supply from those areas. Even though I'm biased, I am so incredibly impressed by our Vermont slaughterhouse facilities and the protocols they've put in place to keep their workers and all of us healthy while keeping the local food supply chain going. We have a good stock of supply already with the farm so hoping that will continue. We are also working hard at the farm with contingency planning in case facilities that process our products for distribution have challenges with staffing and handling an increased demand.

Direct to Consumer

Our online ordering platform is going really well. It's so nice to no longer be dealing with a google form the way we were doing it the last five years. We feel lucky that we've been working on rolling out online ordering since June 2019. Adding on products from our farmer friends has been a fun experience and it feels good to be helping them with sales

they lost through other channels. We've put quite a good little system in place for receiving protocols so we don't come face-to-face with each other. We have set up an ordering window that closes every week on Monday night at midnight. On Tuesday mornings we send a list of sold products to our farmer friends and they drop those off to us Tuesday afternoons for no-contact doorstep delivery Wednesdays and Thursdays. We are also allowing no-contact pickup of products at the farm and are letting customers know the same applies with our partner farm products – they need to get their orders in by Monday evenings in order to be able to pick up from a sanitized cooler at the farm on their preferred pickup day. I don't know if we will do this forever but so far, having just a couple farms that are very close to us is making this not too much of a headache for us and valuable to our customers right now. Our website refresh and online ordering platform does have some design issues we would like to fix but they aren't hindering our ability to fulfill orders so they haven't been a top priority. We hope to get things totally updated to how we like it in the next week or so. www.snugvalleyfarm.com

Virtual Tourism/Farm Experiences

Our **Facebook Live videos** have been really fun. Our connectivity is a little bit of an issue at times since cell service is limited. If we had better service, I'd love for us to host a zoom farm tour or something along those lines but for right now, we are continuing to launch some Facebook Live videos so people can see what's going on with the farm. Ben is very active on Instagram (**@snugvalleyfarmer**) and he's gotten in the habit of doing a farmer moment of zen on his Instagram story and our Snug Valley Farm Facebook story each morning (some of his farm buddies have teased him

about it but I think it's really cool and just what we all need). We normally host a bunch of pasture walks in the summer to teach people about our farm and what regenerative agriculture really means so I anticipate we will be able to do a live virtual pasture walk as we turn our grass-fed beef out to the pasture and the pigs get to move out to their pastured pig huts.

Restaurants

I don't have much to share on the restaurant front since they are all now closed. We've been talking with some chef friends about creative ways to keep them fed and busy. And we've also been considering creating a place in our online ordering platform to donate to either a food pantry or local restaurant workers. Stay tuned on what we come up with there. -**Kelly & Ben Snug Valley Farm, Hardwick, VT**