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COMMENT

In winter mode... finally!

By Ted BrownSpecial to The IFP

I think most will agree the recent weather has been a rollercoaster ride.

We've had low temperatures, and even that scary load of snow dumped on us out of nowhere.

I've found the past weeks have been a ruthless around Brown Farm. We've dealt with a busy summer, enjoyed a Sept. 6 wedding, and followed up with a municipal election

Much of November, Mother Nature has been testing the mettle of local farmers by dumping that surprise load of snow on us, followed by continuous wet weather, making the fall harvest of soybeans and corn something of a challenge.

Those deep water-filled ruts we see in the fields as we drive along is a solemn indicator of how trying it's been to take off the crops. Many fields are only partly harvested, the farmers waiting for a severe frost to freeze the ground firm enough to drive on, so the equipment won't go out of sight in the mud.

Personally I don't harvest corn or soybeans, but I was there a few decades back—so I can certainly feel their pain.

Up until last weekend, I still had some challenges on the home front at Brown Farm, trying to put things in order before the snows of winter fly.

As we neared the end of November, I finally had to put my foot down and say, "No more 'stuff'! It's time for the farm to take priority!"

Whew, that felt good.

The sheep were still outside, but last Friday morning, as I entered the barn, I felt cozy. I made a flash executive decision— the sheep are now in for the winter.

I sorted them, balanced the number in each pen, and by mid-afternoon, I had them all settled. That night, as I fed them, the barn was dead quiet— a good thing.

Quiet sheep are happy sheep.



A Ted Bit

No matter what weather we face now, it doesn't impact the sheep one bit.

On to the outside chores.

I only had one field to plow, but before I could plow it, I wanted to spread a pile of 'sheep poop' and plow it under.

A couple days later, the pile was gone, and one more item was checked off the fall prep list.

The plow I purchased last summer wasn't new, but new to me. The moldboards (the parts that turn the soil under) hadn't been greased in a very long time, so I had to polish the rust off them with a belt sander, bringing them up to a mirror shine, before I could consider plowing with it. When moldboards are rusted, the plow simply plugs up with sod and dirt— not too much fun.

The sheep poop all spread, half the field plowed— and in comes wet weather and snow.

It's difficult to plow a field with snow on the ground as the land becomes greasy, and the tractor tires can't get much traction.

I waited... and waited... Saturday the opportunity came and I hit the ground running. I finished plowing the field, cleaned the plow and greased the moldboards, then parked it and then put the heavy tire chains on the tractor.

I backed into the shed and mounted the eight foot snow blower.

Whew! I was finished— literally and figuratively!

An undisclosed number of extra strength Tylenol later that night, I was almost able to walk standing straight. My old back doesn't like tire chains or snowblowers.

But it's done— I'm ready for winter.

I'm not looking forward to the snow, but at least I sleep nights, knowing all is in place for the winter.

And that's half the battle.

