

# Draft Animal Power Network

Connecting Animal Power, Farms, Forests, People, & Ideas

Winter 2011

Volume I Number 1

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## 2011 NEAPFD at NOFA Summer Conference



Robert Crichton, Berwick, Maine, dragging the track with six mules at the 4th annual Northeast Animal-Power Field Days in October 2010 at the Tunbridge Fairgrounds in Tunbridge, VT.

By David Fisher

As winter beds the region in a deep blanket of snow, we find ourselves on these cold dark nights reflecting on seasons past and dreaming of opportunities for the future. This winter, we have been reflecting on the virtues of the Northeast Animal-Power Field Days and what it has meant to hundreds, if not thousands, of people over the past four years of its existence. We have been weighing the challenges that we have faced in holding the event in its established form, time of year, and location. We have been dreaming of the ways in which this event can grow in the future so that it may continue to inspire, teach, connect, and supply the working animal community in the Northeast and beyond.

In our search for the next evolutionary steps for our event we have found a wonderful opportunity in working with the Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA). NOFA has invited us to hold the Field Days in conjunction with its annual Summer Conference, which has been successfully running for 36 years. We feel that this opportunity will help us meet many of our goals. Although the Animal-Power Field Days has been a thriving success on many levels, it has been financially challenging to produce, and has required an unsustainable investment of time and energy from its organizers. NOFA will help us with the biggest challenges we have faced by providing the administrative and financial support necessary for the event. NOFA will also help us extend our scope of education by connecting us to a still broader community.

This year we will hold the Northeast Animal-Power Field Days as a component of the NOFA Summer Conference at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, MA. Those wishing to attend will register for the Summer Conference and will have access to all of the benefits that event offers (see the Summer Conference website [www.nofasummerconference.org](http://www.nofasummerconference.org)) as well as all of the features of the Northeast Animal-Power Field Days. The bulk of our event will be held at the UMass Research Farm in South Deerfield, less than 15 minutes north from the university campus. The research farm is in an amazing location featuring the steep slopes and red cliffs of Mt. Sugarloaf at its back and the mighty Connecticut River at its foot, while it sits on some of the most productive soils in the region.

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## Draft Animal Power Network Organizes

Welcome to the premiere issue of the quarterly newsletter of the Draft Animal Power Network. At our annual NEAPFD in Tunbridge, VT in October we began to transition to a membership organization in a community effort to bring together the annual Field Days event and our online discussion forum on animal power issues. The goal of the Draft Animal Power Network is to provide year-round educational and networking opportunities, highlighting ongoing efforts of people throughout the region who are educating, mentoring and building community around animal power and renewable land use. We welcome farmers, foresters, loggers, teamsters, animal owners, homesteaders, conservation organizations, draft animal clubs, and like-minded individuals.

This newsletter is just one of our initial activities, and as in all we endeavor, we welcome your contributions.

## Draft Animal Power Network

### Mission Statement:

Advancing the use of draft animals and promoting sustainable land stewardship by providing resource connections and shared learning opportunities while building community.

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## Editor's Comment: The Season for Retooling

By Louis H. Battalen

Our network of draft animal power enthusiasts began in the fall of 2005 when Carl Russell and Lisa McCrory, owners and operators of Earthwise Farm and Forest of Bethel, VT held a horse-logging weekend workshop at their farm. "The sense of community ran high," recalls McCrory, an organic dairy and livestock consultant. Twenty presenters were on hand and forty participants attended, and from that first experience "it was clear that a larger more comprehensive community gathering would be well received." That vision has now become the framework for our new membership organization, the Draft Animal Power Network (DAPNet).

After a one year hiatus, and seeking to accommodate more attendees, the 2007 gathering moved to the larger venue of the Tunbridge Fairgrounds in nearby Tunbridge, and expanded the program's focus, using draft animals in both forestry and farming demonstrations and exposing participants to the practical application of methods, techniques, and equipment in a trade fair and conference venue. The couple's hope was that the Northeast Animal-Power Field Days would become an annual gathering where folks from all over the northeast could come to expect access to some of the most current resources available in the field of draft animal power. Sure enough, as a result of the Field Days, a network of people and resources for draft animal power began to emerge. "We became a clearinghouse for contacts, events, items and animals wanted or for sale, and other resources, which has grown into a year-round enterprise," says Russell, a horse logger and forestry consultant.

An online forum called *Draft Animal Power: sustainable farming, forestry, and living, featuring discussions about working horses, mules, and oxen, sustainable farming, forestry, and building community* ([www.draftanimalpower.com](http://www.draftanimalpower.com)), was established after the 2007 event, attracting an international following of more than 1200 followers by 2008 and servicing 2,864 by the beginning of 2011. By 2009 the couple realized, as they wrote in that year's program notes, "that these field days are really just two days out of a year-round endeavor for most of us." Carl and Lisa had become "increasingly aware of the connections that this event has helped to foster among a diverse community of interest...around the use of animal power and renewable land-use." The three-day event that includes field and forestry intensives, classroom style workshops, equipment demonstrations, swap meets, local food vendors and a community kitchen, was attracting 1,000

*(Continued on page 10)*

## Welcoming Words from Board's First President

By Geoff Pritchard

As the newly selected president of the Draft Animal Power Network (DAPNet), I want to welcome you to the inaugural edition of our newsletter, a quarterly publication for members of the DAPNet community. In the coming months the board of directors and various committees will be working diligently to grow and develop our community.

As a farmer using draft animal power, I think of our future course in terms of experiences I've had plowing behind my team. Heading out into the field my hopes and expectations are high while my view is obscured by two big horse rear ends. Undaunted, I pick an aiming point on the horizon and plow onward only to be discouraged by the curvy, less than perfect furrow I've created. Still, I continue, and eventually, after hitting a few rocks here and there, I've got a nicely plowed field. So, too, will be the course of our network. It might be hard to see the future and will sometimes be less than perfect with bumps here and there, but without a doubt, perseverance and hard work will result in a fine product. So I encourage you to join us, set your expectations high, and take part in "plowing" new ground that we call DAPNet.

From behind a team,

Geoff Pritchard,

Deary, Idaho

# Paul Birdsall, 2010 NEAPFD Feature Farmer

By David Fisher

*In each issue we will select a farmer whose work and way of life will be recognized and explored.*

*Below is an edited version of David Fisher's introductory remarks in recognizing Paul Birdsall as the 2010 Northeast Animal Power Field Day Feature Farmer. Rob Flory of the Howell Living History Farm and Les Barden of Barden Tree Farm have been previous NEAPFD honorees.*

It is a great honor for us to present DAPNet's feature farmer, Paul Birdsall, who has truly been one of the grandfathers of the horse powered farming movement of the last thirty to forty years.

Born in Williamstown, Massachusetts in 1927, Paul is a living link to a time when horsepower was the norm on American farms. Paul grew up around his grandfather's farm in western Massachusetts where horses were the sole source of power. Though agriculture was not to be in his future for some time after his childhood, the seeds of the farmer were doubtlessly sown in the fertile soul of that young boy. The Second World War was the backdrop to Paul's teenage years, and through his early adulthood he bore witness to the wholesale mechanization of agriculture and the implementation of the Green Revolution. Instead of farming, however, Paul pursued a career in business and then in education for many years.

It was not until 1973 that Paul and his late wife, Mollie, had had enough of the prevalent cultural and political system and determined that their best course to effect change was to pursue a lifestyle that embodied their values. They headed to the coast of Maine, along with their two young sons, to take up the craft of farming on a historic 300-acre farm that they purchased. It was here



David Fisher, left, with his former mentor, featured farmer Paul Birdsall, cited for his contribution to the advancement of the required skills, techniques, and knowledge of working with work animals.

that those agrarian seeds, lying dormant in Paul's soul, came to germinate. With energy issues approaching a critical level as the last oil crisis loomed, horses seemed an attractive and rational means of power on their newly acquired farm. With the help of a nearby "old timer," Paul took up the lines and gradually grew into a teamster himself, employing his horses in vegetable, grain, hay, livestock, and timber production in the years to follow.

No sooner had he taken up the craft, however, than he found a young man at his door asking to be his apprentice. "Apprentice?" Paul asked turning to Mollie, "what's an apprentice?" And so the Birdsalls' career of agricultural mentoring, teamster training, and proverbial seed sowing of their own crop of young farmers began.

*(Continued on page 9)*

## Save the date for Annual Meeting in September

The Draft Animal Power Network will hold its annual meeting at the Fairwinds Farm in Brattleboro, VT on the weekend of Sept. 16, 17, and 18. This three-day affair, hosted by the Bailey family, will cover business and social activities. Further information will be included in the newsletter's spring issue.

## DAPNet Thanks

DAPNet would like to thank its Fiscal Sponsor, **Rural Vermont**, an organization dedicated to educating, advocacy, and activating for a vibrant local food system. We also thank **Erika Marczak** for supporting the costs of this first issue with a directed contribution. Others are equally welcomed to do so and will also be acknowledged.

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# Highlights from the Online Discussion Forum

## The Whiffletree and the Evener

By Mark Cowdrey

When I talk to people who have been to one or more Northeast Animal Powered Field Days one of the commonly stated benefits is getting together and spending time with others in the draft animal community. Another comment is the appreciation of the learning opportunities found there.

The discussion forum Draft Animal Power ([www.draftanimalpower.com](http://www.draftanimalpower.com)) is an online outgrowth of those twin values of community and learning. The forum features discussions about working animals, building community, and celebrating renewable land-use practices. Since the first post by Carl Russell ("Let's get this Party Started") at 4:23 PM on December 5th of 2007, the online community has grown to 2,864 registered members, 644 who have posted a comment within the last 60 days. At any time there are typically at least twice as many "guests" (unregistered viewers) than members online. Don't be bashful, register! Overall there are 3,209 "threads" composed of a total of 23,249 "posts" which are the individual questions, answers, comments, responses,



Carl Russell's evener from the thread that drew 39 posts in 20 days.

and, yes, opinions, of the members.

The Draft Animal Power discussion board is open to any and all. Participating is a great way to get some input on a question, tell about a technique that works for you, find out what others are doing and generally stay connected and learning with the people you enjoy visiting with at the NEAPFD.

I enjoy a wide variety of the discussion threads on the forum, including comments in "Member Diaries" and the sometimes hot "Off Topic Discussions." I find most interesting the technical threads dealing with working animals, husbandry and equipment.

One such technical discussion started around a question I had about balancing the load between two horses of unequal strength by adjusting how far from the evener hitch point each whiffletree is hooked. I described my crude adjustments and inquired about some of the finer points of Carl Russell's evener that I had seen at the 2010 NEAPFD. As is typical I immediately received

responses with information including pictures. The original question prompted additional ones, as well as people chiming in on related issues.

Up to this point the thread was pretty typical in the exchange of information. In this case, however, members with engineering expertise applied themselves to the issue and came up with diagrams and calculations that are quite revealing. Not only can we control the load distribution between horses by moving each whiffletree attachment in or out on the evener, but as one horse moves ahead or falls behind, a typical evener redistributes more of the load to the lead horse.

The specifics of the geometry involved are best explained with the help of the sketches, charts and diagrams found in the online "thread." Suffice it to say here that a typical evener with the single trees attached "ahead" of where the evener is secured to the load has a built-in advantage to the lagging horse, and his advantage increases the more he lags back. As he moves back up, even though his lever arm relative to the load is getting longer, he is actually losing advantage because relative to his team mate he is coming back closer to "even." From here the discussion moved to the possible advantages of increasing the distance front-to-back between the load hitch point and the whiffletree hitch points. The fascinating and not that surprising conclusion is that the most effective distance overall is about four inches, the typical one that has come down through the ages!

Many thanks to all who contributed to this thread, in particular Andy Carson, the erstwhile "Countymouse", for doing calculations and graphing. Tim Harrigan and "CharlyBonifaz" also contributed their engineering perspective and expertise.

For more detailed information, check out the thread online. It is "Evener to single tree adjustable attachment" at [www.draftanimalpower.com/showthread.php?t=3682](http://www.draftanimalpower.com/showthread.php?t=3682). If computers baffle you I'll bet you can find someone to help and that you will be glad you did. Go ahead, ask.

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# Winter Woods Gathering at Perry Farm

By Carl Russell



On Saturday, January 29th more than thirty people gathered at the Neal Perry Farm in Brownington, VT. They came from all over Vermont and New Hampshire, including one couple that traveled from the Berkshires in Massachusetts, to the annual "Horse-Logging and Winter Woods Work Gathering" organized by the Bailey family of Fairwinds Farm in Brattleboro, VT.

Neal Perry and Bekah Bailey hosted the event on the hillside farm where Neal grew up, deep in the heart of Vermont's Northeast Kingdom. During the daylong event there were discussions and demonstrations of harnessing horses for work and many other aspects of working horses in the woods during winter.

Neal, Bekah, and Jay Bailey of Fairwinds Farm, started the event by addressing issues of harnessing and hitching horses for winter work. Rueben Bailey gave a demonstration of safe tree felling techniques. Long-time

Washington, VT horse-logger Bob Capobianco led a discussion of bucking logs for best utilization. Neal used his team of Morgan horses hitched on a Pioneer Forecart fitted with a Cowdrey PiggyBack FireWood Arch to skid some large black cherry logs out of the wood. Bekah Bailey had the farm's team of Belgians giving rides and moving blocked firewood on a large double bobsled.

There was a fantastic potluck lunch in the old farm house featuring many home made soups and other hearty winter fare. After lunch the work turned to cutting and skidding cedar tress with a single Morgan stallion. Several of the logs were then split to build a split-rail fence on the sides of a new bridge on the woods road. Despite the steady cold and snow flurries everyone enjoyed themselves and while longing to stay for more, all headed home full of new ideas and inspired to do more work with their own horses.

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# Northeast Animal-Power Field Days 2010 & 2011:



Several hundred people assemble on Saturday to listen to Carl Russell's keynote address, "Continuity: passing on the skills."



Announcer Lynn Miller welcomes Donn Hewes into the arena on his shop-built conversion of a McD #7 mower to a ground drive PTO.

## 2010 NEAPFD Held In Rain, Cold, and Sun

By Bekah Bailey

I just received a whole CD of photos from the Northeast Animal Power Field Days held at the Tunbridge, VT Fairgrounds on October 17, 18 & 19, 2010. As I look through the photos I am struck by the contrasts and extremes that encompass the event and its highlights.

The weekend started off with torrential rains on Friday that resulted in canceling the outdoor events and moving equipment demos into the covered arena. There were plenty of folks gathered around the arches, sleds and other equipment that were demonstrated, but there were also lots of people gathered along the edges talking. They were renewing old connections and making new ones, underscoring the word "Network" in our new organization, the Draft Animal Power Network.

Friday evening featured an Open-mic where 30 people gathered to share stories, poetry, songs, and humor. Lynn Miller, editor of the *Small Farmer's Journal*, spun several of his characteristically insightful and humorous tales. These types of gatherings have become extremely well received at the NEAPFD, and this was no exception. Many people were moved by what they heard, and if there hadn't been a time limit set beforehand, it might have gone on all night.

Saturday the weather was bright and sunny but cold, as illustrated by the quantities of plaid shirts present in photos of the keynote by Carl Russell and Featured Farmer presentation. David Fisher did a lovely job of introducing the recipient, Paul Birdsall of Blue Hill, ME who, with his son and grandson, grows vegetables with their Suffolk Horses providing the power. Paul has an extensive list of apprentices, many of whom now provide significant quantities of food for their local communities around the northeast.

Saturday's events included a variety of workshops, demonstrations and presentations: trimming ox feet in stocks, mower rebuilding, horse training, grazing horses, plowing & cultivating, the horse power hay packer, driving oxen and more. And of course, almost every photo

shows people watching and visiting.

Saturday afternoon was an impromptu demonstration by Neal Perry working with a horse who was new to his owner and who did not want his feet handled. Neal did a bunch of rope work with the horse, picking up his feet by the end of the session.

On Saturday evening there was a debut of a documentary film by independent journalist Jared Flesher. *The Farmer and the Horse* follows the trajectory of three young farmers in New Jersey as they work for experience and try to determine if animal powered farming is in their future. Along with the personal stories, the film also does a remarkable job of explaining the history of agriculture in New Jersey and the accompanied plight of the horse as farm animal.

Circuitnavigating the event throughout the weekend were power sources of every description. The famous driving cow gave rides to several folks; a team of mini horses pulled their driver and a passenger around the track; and Bob Crichton, with a team of six mules, groomed the track, trying to keep the mud under control. There were oxen of all sizes and descriptions, from a few months to many years in age, brown, black, and spotted.

Sunday morning featured a scrumptious Teamster Appreciation Breakfast (many thanks to the volunteers who pulled that off!) followed by an obstacle course demonstration. The course featured a number of challenges including hooking to and unhooking the log, barrels marking "bridges", a Christmas tree that slid toward the horses as they moved forward (very ingenious!), and a "forest" of trees to walk through. All teamsters were welcome to this casual event and it was fascinating to watch the variety of driving styles, communication methods and relationships.

All in all, it was a wonderful weekend! Torrential downpour to bright autumn sun, tiny calves to huge oxen, miniature horses, medium sized and extra large, too! People talking, learning, watching and listening, ready for more. Time to start planning for next year!

# From Tunbridge, VT to Amherst, MA



*Bucky Cole and Brian Patten demonstrate oxen hoof care.*



*Michael Glos, with his Fjord, discusses an I & J single horse walking cultivator.*

## 2011 NEAPFD

*(Continued from page 1)*

The NEAPFD at the research farm will look a lot like the Field Days have looked in the past at Tunbridge, VT. We will offer a large array of working horse, mule, and oxen workshops and equipment demonstrations in the following areas: tillage and crop production; haymaking; logging; equipment adjustment and repair; animal health care and maintenance; and training working animals. Classroom-based workshops will be held among the other conference workshops on the university's campus. In addition, we hope to hold a small piece of the event at Natural Roots, a horse-powered CSA farm located in the nearby town of Conway.

As a backdrop to this event, the synergy of the natural, cultural and agricultural richness of the surrounding Pioneer Valley is truly something to behold, especially at high summer. We are really looking forward to this exciting collaboration, and to sharing all that the NOFA Summer Conference and the Northeast Animal-Power Field Days have to offer.

*To see more photographs and read descriptions of previous Field Days visit [www.draftanimalpowernetwork.org](http://www.draftanimalpowernetwork.org) and follow the link to Field Days. A complete listing of this summer's conference workshops and demonstrations will be included in the newsletter's spring issue.*

## NEAPFD Compost Stations Also Turn Into Demonstration Projects

By Tyler Buswell

The NEAPFD was more than just a successful gathering for draft-power enthusiasts: it was also a resource recovery success. Event organizers teamed up with the Highfields Center for Composting, based in Hardwick, Vt, to divert nearly all of the event's post-consumer food scraps and organic matter to be composted by Robert Sandberg at Sandberg Farm in nearby Corinth, as part of his Cookville Compost program. The program serves several towns surrounding Corinth, helping to divert food scraps from local schools, summer camps, and business and turns them into compost, food for the soil.

Highfields worked with volunteers and University of Vermont Master Composters to run "resource recovery" stations to collect nearly 16 yards of food scraps and bedding and manure from the animal stalls. This effort prevented these food scraps and manure from being wasted in the landfill or prematurely field applied where they would have contributed to methane gas emissions or caused a greater risk for nutrient runoff. Methane is a powerful greenhouse gas 20 times more damaging than carbon dioxide. Highfields calculates that composting five gallons of food scraps prevents emissions equivalent to the burning of over one

gallon of gasoline! Just think of the difference that composting nearly 16 yards of materials made!

The composting success has further catalyzed Highfields' efforts to offer community-powered public venue resource recovery and reduce waste efforts state-wide. Using the NEAPFD as a benchmark, Highfields has developed an Event Services program and an accompanying Volunteer Program, empowering citizens to be active change agents in their community.

**The Draft Horse Connection** 

the quarterly magazine that gives voice to the living tradition of Canadian horse farming.

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New Canadian Draft Horse & Oxen Farming Videos  
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# Horse Logging & Forestry—A Landowner's Perspective

By Erika Keller Rogoff

In 1986, my husband and I bought property with almost 200 acres of land in Bethel, VT. In the first six years, we had the land logged twice with loggers chosen by conventional foresters. The first time was a disaster. The second was an even worse disaster. Trees were left scarred and marked, nicked and broken. The land was left with large ridges and gouges, many of which we still have, and the creek beds had roads through them from the loggers' heavy machinery.

After the second logging, I began to call around to find a forester and loggers who had more respect for and an understanding of the land, the trees, and forest ecology. I was told about Carl Russell. I remember the first time we walked our land with Carl. He helped us look at the forest — how to think about it in terms of the ecology, regeneration of trees, open spaces, and wildlife habitat as well as the commercial value of the trees to a logger and to us as land owners. With this, our education in forest ecology and land management probably began in earnest.

Carl became our forester, rewrote the management plan, and logged the land with his horses. His work opened the land, allowed for new growth, provided logging trails, offered rich avenues for our forest wildlife, and preserved what this land could provide not only for humans but for the wildlife and the earth. It was what we wanted. Watching him and one of his colleagues log with the animals was in itself an education. The areas that were logged were carefully chosen with tree regeneration as one criterion. The trails were prepared with drainage canals for water and adequate space to bring the logs down to a landing area at the base of our fields. The trees were marked and cut, falling precisely to their appointed landing place. Limbs, branches and leaves were cut, gathered and piled for the wildlife. Skegs were left up against the trees. The areas that were logged were left with a sense of integrity, with absolutely minimal damage.

In the winter of 2010, I contacted Carl again, needing an updated forest management plan and knowing that we needed to begin doing additional logging. Initially, he said he would prepare the plan but that he didn't have the time to log. By April, he had put together a team of loggers who used draft animals and were committed to his kind of forest management. Carl and his colleagues, Ben Canonica, Brad Johnson and Kevin Rea, worked cooperatively to log the land in the summer and early fall of 2010. With Carl as the forester, they began logging with their teams of horses, using a small tractor with a forwarder to build the trails and logging roads. They brought out logs with minimal impact to the land. With first-aid kits seeded at strategic places, they brought with them each day safety helmets and hearing protection, lunches, thermoses, and water. They worked through hot and cold

weather, rain and sunshine. Sometimes they worked together and sometimes they worked individually. Timber was marked and cut, brought to landing areas, and transported to a place by the road. There it was picked up by logging trucks and taken to the mills. Instead of the land being scarred and slashed, the forest was left intact, but opened and made accessible. The trails made a huge difference. We would walk them each weekend. Neighbors would walk the land. We would find our neighbors' contributions of small wood sculptures on a stump or the side of a trail or stuck in a hollow, as thanks.

At this past Northeast Animal-Power Field Days, the "logging team" led a workshop talking about the work they had done. Kevin and Ben were the presenters with Brad and my husband and myself also in attendance. They had great "before" and "after" pictures, showing the process, the rationale by which trees were cut, with a lot of detail about what they did and how they did it. There were questions, concerns, and comments from the audience. Some of the discussion included the issues of insurance, liability, the amount of money that they were getting and whether it was worth it for the amount of work they were doing, land owners' involvement, interest, and interference. The conversation was lively and involved.

Using draft animals to selectively log with objectives of promoting forest growth, to making long-range ecological decisions, and to open the land to wildlife, as well as making some money for us and the forester and loggers, has been one of the most exciting and best parts of our involvement with our land. I have described the land, after the logging this year, as singing. Come visit and walk these trails and see if it sings for you, too!

***"His work... preserved what this land could provide not only for humans but for the wildlife and the earth."***

**The deadline for submitting articles, letters to the editor, ads, classifieds, and calendar items for the spring issue is April 25. Contact an editor with a proposal well in advance of that date.**

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## Birdsall Named Feature Farmer

(Continued from page 3)

Paul's dedication and determination to implement positive change through agricultural renewal by no means stops at the boundaries of his farm. Over the years Paul has invested himself in many other organizations while maintaining his own farm and apprenticeship program. He has been an educator at the Maine Organic Farm and Garden's Common Ground Fair, giving wagon rides with his horses for the first 25 years of the event and also doing horse powered farming demonstrations for many of those years. Paul has been a co-coordinator for all draft horse events at the fair since it moved to its current location, some 12 years ago, and has taught many Low Impact Forestry workshops as well. Paul has worked tirelessly to preserve and enhance working farmland, not just that which he stewards at Horse Power Farm, but hundreds, if not thousands, of acres beyond. He has served as the chair of the soil and water conservation district board in his own Hancock County continuously since the 1970's. He has served on the Blue Hill Heritage land Trust since the mid 1980's, and he has served on the Maine Farmland Trust since 2000.

Perhaps most significant among his contributions to the future of agriculture, however, are the 150 plus apprentices that he has trained since that first young fellow wandered onto his farm looking to learn the teamster's craft back in 1975. In this way Paul Birdsall has sown perhaps the most valuable crop of all – the next generation of teamster farmers. I consider myself to be extremely fortunate to be among those that got their start in farming with the Birdsalls, which in my case was in 1997. I would like to share a taste of that experience as I wrote about it for the *Natural Farmer* newspaper in the following year. Here are a few excerpts:

*One wet April day, Paul said he would be changing the shoes on the horses and asked if any of us would like to watch; I jumped to my feet! Paul suggested that I might be able to learn some of the farrier's skills. I assumed he meant over the course of weeks or months, and so I calmly watched as he unclenched, or straightened, the nails and pulled a shoe off of Babe, who stood patiently munching hay. "You want to give it a try?" Paul offered, handing me the tools. "Uh, sure" I replied, not at all expecting the opportunity to touch any of this shoeing business for some time. "Foot," I requested of Babe, and agreeably she lifted her right hind hoof. I set it on a block of wood and with a couple of taps I had unclenched one of the nails. I looked up at Paul, expecting some commentary: what to do better, differently, or simply next. Paul, with a twinkle in his eye, only said, "Well, I've got to go run some errands in town. Why don't you take the rest of her shoes off while I'm gone." and he was out the door. "Eeep!" my stomach dropped to the floor. There I was, all alone with a 3/4 ton Belgian in the center of an immense ancient barn, wearing leather chaps that made me look like a cowboy, with a box full of tools of which I knew none of the names. My knees began to quake. Then after a minute, frozen in place, a wave of confidence came over me. No doubt this was inspired, in part, by Paul's confidence in me. This experience set the stage for the season ahead.*


*Well, with that cold, wet spring, we had plenty of time to learn, and when the fields finally dried out in May, we were ready to get down to business. We got to disking up a storm, let me tell you, with four apprentices, two farmers, eight horses, and a barnyard full of equipment, there was no stopping us. Two horse, three horse, even four horse hitches we had out, sometimes*

*even six horses were working at once, in two hitches. Wahoo! We were horse farming!*

After leaving Horse Power farm, I was lucky to start up my own farm within a year and got my first team by the year 2000. At present, my wife, Anna, and I have hosted about 20 apprentices of our own, most of whom are currently employed in agricultural production in one form or another. One of our proudest moments though, came this year when two of our former apprentices, Micah and Bethany Spicher-Schoenberg got their first team of horses to power Plowshares Produce, their farm operation in central Pennsylvania. As they continue to refine their systems, they will undoubtedly find themselves mentoring green teamsters and apprentices of their own in the years to come. And so the cycle continues, seed to seed, teamster to teamster.

Over the years Paul has had his share of challenges to overcome. Not the least of which was losing long time farming partner and wife, Mollie, to cancer around the year 2000. Fortunately he has had the steadfast support of community and family along the way.

Now, in the year 2010, Paul Birdsall is 83 years old, still farming full time. With the help of his son, Andy, and daughter-in-law, Donna, Horse Power Farm has continued to thrive. Recently Paul has been joined by the next teamster in line, his grandson, Andy Jr., age 23, and his young family. At his age, you might think that the story of Paul Birdsall might be nearing its last chapters. But with four generations of Birdsalls at Horse Power Farm and dozens of apprentices farming and training their apprentices who are now training their apprentices and so on, the legacy of this man will clearly be manifesting change for many more decades to come.



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## Season for retooling

(Continued from page 2)

people. The organization of the NEAPFD events and the maintenance of the online forum, however, brought in associated costs that went above and beyond the income returned from the annual event. The two of them, as primary organizers, put in hundreds of hours each year, assisted by an ever-changing corps of volunteers. It had become time, they and others realized, that “forming an official organization would be the best way to share in the effort so that we can all gain from the connections that resulted from NEA PFD.”

Time was set-aside on Sunday, Oct 17, on the last day of the Field Days, to discuss the future of the network. Conferees, visitors and teamsters, alike, gathered to hear from Carl and Lisa about their Herculean efforts in organizing this annual event and in operating the web sites. It was agreed that more hands needed to take responsibility in handling the lines, and, fortuitously and just as significantly, more minds wanted to play a role. From that meeting, a series of late autumn and early winter conference calls, some involving more than 20 members, was held. A transition team of eight was selected. Committees were created and immediately set to work. Rural Vermont was selected as the group’s fiscal sponsor. A partnership with Northeast Organic Farming Association was formed to hold the fifth annual NEAPFD concomitantly with that organization’s summer conference at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst campus. In January, a board of directors was selected and officers were elected.


Drafts of a mission statement were shared on the draft forum and in e-mails; the concern for accuracy and succinctness was very evident, and the love for this nascent organization quickly discernible and quite palpable in the respect and consideration shown each other.

Carl and Lisa are encouraged and pleased by the progress of the last few months, especially, says Carl, “by the large core group that has stepped up to participate in organizing and administering the growth of the network.” At the same time, he adds, “it is interesting how the networking seems to be hidden from the view of many people who rely on us for the connectivity. This is why we feel that an organization providing networking services to this community needs to be formalized so that it is more recognizable and can have access to other sources of funding such as grants.”



A list of board members, officers, committees and their respective chairs is in the masthead. The communication committee includes both the newsletter and a web-site subcommittee; the latter is responsible for both the organizational website, [www.draftanimalpowernetwork.org](http://www.draftanimalpowernetwork.org), and the resource site, [www.draftanimalpower.com](http://www.draftanimalpower.com), developed as the online discussion forum.

We invite you to explore these sites, to attend the fifth annual NEAPFD days this summer in Amherst, MA, and to sign up as a member of one of the most exciting and worthy organizations to have formed in years. This truly remarkable collaborative effort is a tribute to the character of the community we are pulling together.

Grab the lines with us, won’t you!





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### NOFA SUMMER CONFERENCE

DAPNet’s annual NEAPFD will be joining with Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) in its 37<sup>th</sup> summer conference in Amherst, MA from August 12 to 14 to produce an event that draws on the strengths of both organizations. This is the northeast’s foremost conference for pioneers and current innovators of organic agriculture and sustainable living, and includes special workshops designed for kids and teens; on-site accommodations; and organic meals. Registration will provide access to the full range of activities. Information is available at [www.nofasummerconference.org](http://www.nofasummerconference.org) and at our website.

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## Mishaps & Misadventures

# Why Uphill Trumps the Outside On a Turn

The Adirondacks saw quite a bit of snow in the early 1940's, too. Good thing for Floyd, who was a young man then. Seems he was skidding a good-sized log, first one of the day, out of those North woods behind his trusted horse, and he came to a bend to the right that at the same time went down a fair incline. As the horse and log swung around the turn Floyd hopped over the load to keep on its outside relative to the bend. Well, next thing he knew that big log's back end started rolling toward him down that incline, and in fact rolled right on top of him and stuck there in the deep snow. The well-trained horse stopped at Floyd's command, baffled, perhaps, by the absence of his teamster. Floyd was down under, pinned tight but unhurt, the lines no longer accessible. The way he tells it he was able to speak to that good horse to step up and get that log dragged off him slowly, at which time he yelled Whoa!, giving him time to extricate himself from his Floyd-shaped impression in the snow, find the lines, and recommence with the job. From then on Floyd made sure he was uphill of a skidding log, even if that meant staying on its inside around a turn.

*Editor's note: If you have a story that taught you a thing or two about working with draft animals, jot it down, and we will see about printing it anonymously. That way the rest of us might avoid repeating that experiment! Please keep it under 400 words and send to Elizabeth.Hendrix@gmail.com*

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

- Conference registration discounts, including NEAPFD at NOFA Summer Conference.
- Quarterly Newsletter.
- Access to Draft Animal Power Discussion Forum and DAPNet website.
- Free classified ads on website and in newsletter.
- Business members and Founders receive a complimentary listing in the Web Business Directory ([www.draftanimalpowernetwork.org/businessdirectory.html](http://www.draftanimalpowernetwork.org/businessdirectory.html))
- Voting privileges and all membership mailings.

Most importantly, your membership supports DAPNet's work.

Basic	\$20.00
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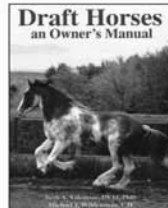
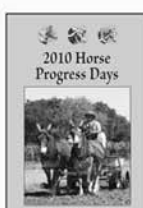
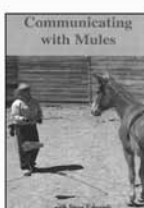
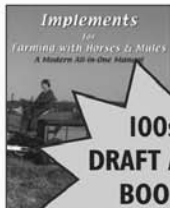
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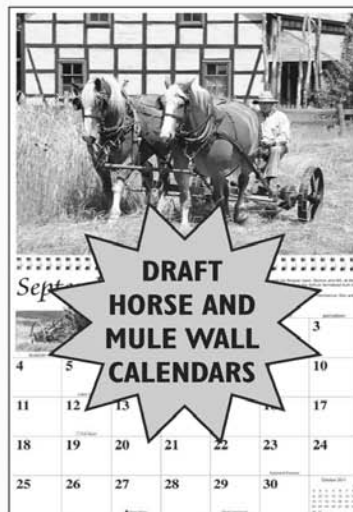
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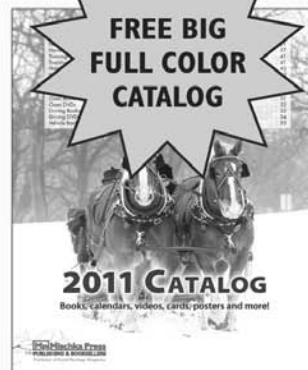
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## PREMIERE ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS:

Paul Birdsall,  
2010 Feature Farmer

2011 NEAPFD  
Moves to Amherst, MA

Winter Logging in the  
Northeast Kingdom

DAPNet Online  
Discussion Forum

Managing Your Woodlot

## CALENDAR

April 2nd, 16th, 30th, May 14th, Draft Horse Workshop, One Day Series. Fair Winds Farm, Brattleboro, VT. (802) 254-9067 or (802) 254-7128 fairwind@sover.net

April 16, Eastern CT Draft Horse Association Plow Match, University of CT Storrs, CT 9AM \$10 per teamster, Dale Nagegeli (860) 742-7117

April 19-22, Draft Horse Workshop, Fair Winds Farm, Brattleboro, VT, Original workshop format for those who prefer 4 days in a row.

April 23, Farmers Draft Horse, Mule & Pony Club Plowing Day, Watkins Farm, Naples, ME, Ron Hill (207) 583-4160

April 30, Hudson Valley Draft Horse Association Plow Day, Saundersskill Farm, Accord, NY, 10AM- 4PM Rick Grey (845) 626-0049

April 30 & May 1, Billings Farm and Museum Spring Farm Festival, Woodstock, VT, Plowing Matches, Oxen Horses (802) 457-2355

May 7, Green Mountain Draft Horse Association Auction, Addison County Field, VT Jean Cross (802) 877-6802

May 14 & 15, GMDHA Driving Clinic, Shelburne Farms, VT Jean Cross (802) 877-6802

May 17-20, Draft Horse Workshop, Fair Winds Farm, Brattleboro, VT, Original workshop format for those who prefer 4 days in a row.

June 4, Plowing and Cultivating with Horses, Fair Winds Farm, Brattleboro, VT.

June 4 & 5, Harvest Hill Horse Progress Days, Farmers Draft Horse, Mule & Pony Club, Mechanic Falls, ME, sales@penbethfarm.com

June 10 & 11, Mowing with Horses, Fair Winds Farm, Brattleboro, VT

July 1 & 2, Horse Progress Days, Kinzers, PA, [www.horseprogressdays.com](http://www.horseprogressdays.com)

August 6 & 7, Oxen Basics Workshop, Sanborn Mill Farm, Loudon, NH, (603) 435-7314

August 12 -14, 5th Annual NEAPFD at NOFA Summer Conference, UMASS, Amherst, MA [www.nofamass.org](http://www.nofamass.org)  
[www.draftanimalpowernetwork.com](http://www.draftanimalpowernetwork.com)

Sept. 16-18, DAPNet Annual Meeting, Fair Winds Farm, Brattleboro, VT (802)234.5524 [www.draftanimalpowernetwork.com](http://www.draftanimalpowernetwork.com)

## CLASSIFIEDS

**Wanted:** Beef bull calf for herd sire, old school polled Hereford or cross preferred, gentle a must. Hoosick Falls, NY (518) 441-9870.

**Equipment for Sale:** Saddle horse equipment, galloping boots, bell boots, overgirths, etc. Well cared for name brand items. Hoosick Falls, NY (518) 441-9870.

**Hay for Sale:** 4 x 4 Dry Round Bales, certified organic by VOF. Approximately 550 lb., unwrapped and stored inside. Cost is \$40 per bale at the barn. Located in Barnard, VT. Contact: Joe Ladouceur, ladouceurlj@aol.com (802)763-7454.

**Ads** are available for \$10 per ad for up to 30 words, \$.20 for each additional word. DAPNet members receive one free ad per issue. The next deadline is April 25. Mail your ad and payment to DAPNet 341 MacIntosh Rd. Randolph, VT 05060