

Christmas 2023 and New Year 2024 Reflections

Second day of Christmas, finally we have seen a bit of sun, after weeks of grey clouds and rain. Perfect for the yearly Christmas walk and waffles with the cows, that my neighbours Chris and Erica hosts.

I now try to write a bit in the lounge chair, while Lycka tries to dive deeper into my pull-over, purring loudly. Calm Christmas, picking my favorites of the good food at various times, and not stressing with either packages, foods or too many festivities.



This year has been a very good year for me. Naturally some rough times, but maybe those are necessary to truly appreciate the everyday blessings. Many everyday blessings, and every night as I go to sleep, I remind me of those.

My consulting business, Berge Veterinary Consulting BV, has been doing good. A lot of trips to many countries, and I have expanded my missions to North Africa and Middle East. The good thing about my profession is that a dairy calf has the same needs and challenges just about everywhere, thus, my expertise can be applied everywhere from Northern Finland to Dubai, to help farmers to optimize the performance of the calves, that naturally are the future of their dairy. I held a workshop for young-stock veterinarians in Denmark, with a broken foot. No, the foot was not broken in cycling or running, but simply being stupid enough to not turn on the light when walking down the stairs at night. The foot healed nicely, and I am now back at running and jumping like before. I enjoyed working with dairy farmers in Denmark, Finland, Czech republic, Italy, Morocco, Estonia, Switzerland, and Dubai.



My first edition of the Healthy Dairy Calf book sold out, so I made a second edition, of which I have already sold hundreds. Here you see cover model Eva flying over me!



Marc and I were training in the spring to go to Northern Italy to bike some more mountains, but unfortunately the training was hampered by bad weather and Marc got a bad infection that grounded him for some time. Thus, we ended up going to the Vosges in France in the end of the summer, and this was a high-light and now we have Northern Italy to look forward to in 2024.



In June, a visit to Sweden to celebrate the high school graduation of my nephew Isak. And in the end of June, an alumni reunion at the International School of Brussels. It was great fun to reminiscence together with old friends.



In September, my friend Jeanine, came from California for 2 weeks, and we had a great time together, and we returned to the Vosges to do the same rides that Marc and I had done a few weeks prior. We rented a nice house through air-bnb and ate lot of cheese and red beets (that I had brought from the vegetable garden).



In the summer I went home to empty out my parent's house to put it for sale. I am my sisters and brother in laws worked hard, but also had fun together.



After that hard work, Marc came to Stockholm, and my whole extended family were treated to a Gyllene Tider concert; very much enjoyed by everyone. Then Marc and I took a rental car and drove north. We stopped a day in Uppsala with my very good friend Anna.



Then we went to our fäbodvall Västerbo in Hälsingland. Our fäbodvall is an old cabin (marked 1777 as building year on the furnace) in the middle of the forest, where villages previously used to take the cows for summer grazing. I used to spend summers here as a child, working on the cabins and dragging pine-tree branches. It felt so special to spend a few days up there again, and I hope to return next summer to repaint the cabin.



During the November break, Marc and I headed to New York city (for the 3rd time). We had a very good reason therefore: Melissa Etheridge was playing on Broadway. My high-school friend Tonia and her partner Keith let us use their apartment in New York! We also went up to Montauk, where Tonia has her heart and cabin, and we got to see her fishing village and the tip of Long Island. Anne Noone also came to NY to hang out with us, so we were the 'terrible three' again!



A trip to Sweden in October using the freight boat from Ghent to Gothenburg with the car (much more pleasant than 14 hours of driving) included bringing some old stuff back from childhood home, being part of the Särимner Swedish artisanal food symposium in Borås, and visiting some friends and dad. At Särимner, we presented a pilot project on safe raw milk, and have now convinced the Food Safety Authority that raw milk can be produced safe and controlled by farmers for direct human consumption.



Marc and I have done good maintenance of our house this year, with a complete washing and restoration of the exterior brick wall, and we are currently laying new bricks on our back teras. With the many trips, and other work I need to do such as managing research projects and writing report and publications, it is hard to feel that the work is ever done. However, the vegetable garden, milking goats, running, cycling, walking, cooking, and just enjoying a purring cat, are also very important parts of my life that is somewhere mixed into the 365 days a year.



This is the first time I am growing my own endives in the cellar, and it is fun and very good. Kurra is inspecting the cherry harvest above, and these cherries have been dried or frozen for winter treats.



When I look back on the year, I can conclude that we have been good busy! Life is good!

I hope that you are also enjoying every single day of the year, and that you try to reflect on the daily blessings. Life on earth is such a fun adventure, we need to embrace it all.

Hugs to you!

Cat.