



Life on the farm



By DIETER KRIEG

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EDITOR'S NOTE: "Life on the farm" columns are written as entertainment for farmers and to promote better understanding between rural and urban folks. All are based on actual recollections and are designed to portray the joys, sorrows, frustrations, daily work and triumphs of life on a Pennsylvania dairy farm. The columns are distributed to several Pennsylvania newspapers and have a sizable urban following.

I can recall an afternoon, 16 years ago, when I sat under the third best cow in the herd, gently running the humming clippers alongside her belly. All of a sudden my right cheek felt numb, and I knew I had been kicked. It was so fast, the pain—hadn't registered yet, and I never saw that hoof coming at me. Getting kicked is bad enough, but almost equally "painful" is the job of trying to regain the startled animal's confidence.

This is the time of year when dairy cows should be clipped—or if you prefer, given a hair cut. Dairy sanitation regulations require that cows be kept clean, and short hair helps to make the task much easier.

Cows which are clipped for the show string receive a beauty treatment which extends from the tip of their nose to the tip of their toes. Even the inside of their ears are clipped.

Cows have been clipped for years; sometimes just for cleanliness, sometimes in preparation for shows, but most always because of a combination of these two reasons. Cows are cleaner and better looking when their coat is trimmed.

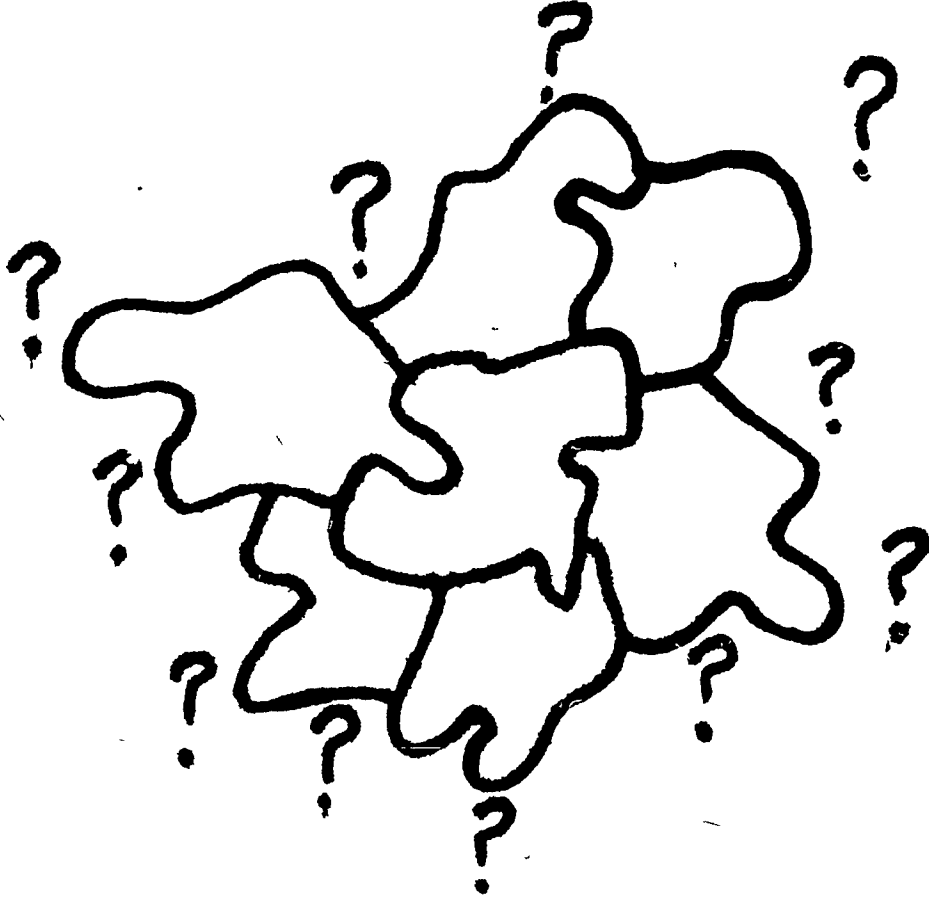
When cows are clipped for sanitary reasons only, the farmer usually doesn't clip any hair other than around the udder, tail, flanks, legs, belly, and up around to the hip bones. With no consideration for making the short and long hairs blend, such cows begin to look like poodles.

Most dairymen, if not all, who place some value on their cows' appearance, will agree that clipped cows look better—but that is only half of it. A dairymen who wants his cows to look nice will not just simply clip the hair, but carefully blend body hair so that the job looks neat.

Aside from the reasons mentioned for clipping, there is a third benefit: comfort and health. Properly cared for and stabled cows do not need the long hair which Mother Nature gives them every winter. Keeping their coat relatively short and well groomed promotes healthy skin and slightly increased milk checks. The cow, feeling much more comfortable than she would otherwise, rewards her master with a few pounds of extra milk per day.

Clipping cows can be a pleasant job, or a life and death affair. Most cows, especially after having experienced it once, are fond of having the clippers gliding along their skin. Some want no part of it, and the flying legs prove it.

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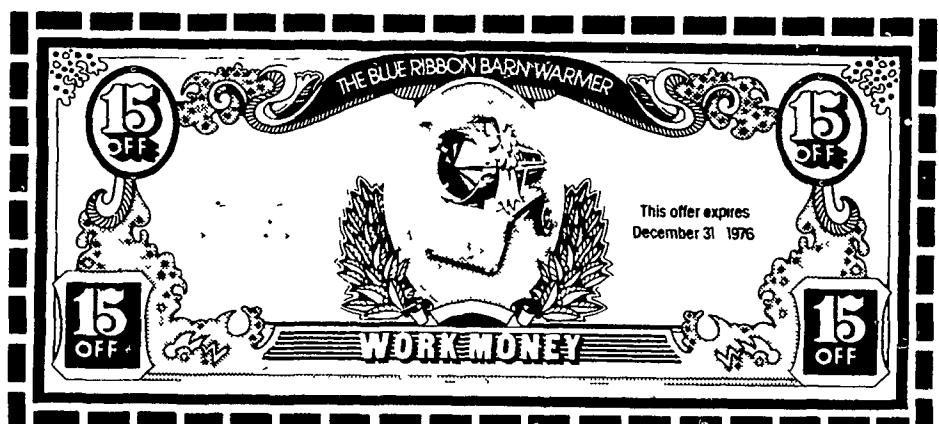
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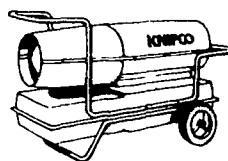
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