

Farm Talk

Jerry Webb

Do Delmarva farmers really spend their winters in Florida, enjoying the fruits of their summer's labors?

There is an old myth to that effect and every once in a while someone mentions a crop rotation that includes corn, soybeans, and Miami. That indicates that some farmers, especially those who grow only crops, limit their activities to corn and soybeans that are grown in a relatively confined period, leaving them plenty of time for extended winter vacations.

That myth was probably started by a dairyman who was a little sore at spending seven days a week milking cows while his crop-farming neighbor took a few days off. But the general consensus here on the Delmarva peninsula, and throughout the country for that matter, is that farmers are rather reluctant to take a vacation even during the winter lull.

With luck, a corn and soybean farmer can be all through with the hard part of harvesting well before Christmas. That means three or four months before the tractors start to roll again.

That's not to say there isn't anything to do around the farm. First off, most farmers have a big obligation to Uncle Sam that

includes a lot of time-consuming paperwork. When that's done there's still the talk of marketing last year's crop, planning for the new season, buying supplies, and getting equipment in shape.

The fact that farmers have to let a lot of things go during the busy harvest season. They're working day and night trying to get the crops in the bin before the weather turns bad. Some years they make it, some years they don't. Given a rainy fall, they can be out there well into January trying to scrape up crops that have fallen to the ground.

There's no doubt most farmers take it a little easy in January and February, spending time in educational meetings, attending auctions, shopping around for equipment and supplies, and in general moving at a slower pace. And a few even take real vacations.

Some sign up for farm-related tours to exotic places like Hawaii, New Orleans, Arizona, and so on. And some go off on their own to visit family in other places or just to look around.

In recent years, quite a bunch of them have climbed aboard their tractors for a few fun-filled days in downtown Washington, D.C.

As a group, it's hard to get farmers away from the farm

even when their duties are pretty well caught up. Maybe it's part of that age-old tradition that says farmers are hardworking, God-fearing, salt-of-the-earth types with their shoulders to the wheel and their noses to the grindstone.

That's a heavy burden and it makes having fun quite difficult.

There's a certain amount of pride in the voice of some farmers when they tell you they never take a vacation, or they haven't been off the farm for more than a day in 20 years.

There's also something kind of sad about that, especially when you consider an older farmer who is not hurting financially, who's never been anywhere or done anything else besides farm. The world is a lot larger than a 200-acre farm, and it wouldn't hurt most farmers to take a little time to find that out.

People in business and industry take vacations. They use this time to relax and rejuvenate, and it's said they come back to work with new perspectives and new enthusiasm. Maybe that's what farmers need after many months of fighting all of the problems of agriculture.

So if you hear about a

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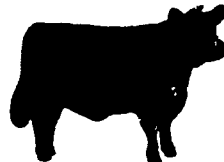
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summer step on top of the range.)

Add diced cheese to hot soup. (Ladle into individual bowls at this point if you plan to serve this way.) Top casserole or bowls with toasted bread, sprinkle with cheese, drizzle with butter. Place in 425 degrees F. oven for 10 minutes, turn on broiler and heat until browned. Serve at once.

neighbor who's gone to Disney World for a few days, don't be too hard on him when he gets back. After all, he's put in a lot of hours this past year and he has some compensatory time due him.

You can bet come early March, when the first signs of Spring start to show, he'll be back from wherever vacation spot he may have chosen with his equipment in tune and his supplies on hand, ready to start another farming year.



Sibling quarrels - normal

NORRISTOWN — Quarrels among children in a family are a normal part of growing up and learning to get along with others. But you need to make a distinction between healthy competition among children and bitter jealousy. Use the intensity and frequency of their quarrels as your guide.

Unless there's real danger of a child getting hurt, Nancy Stevens, Extension home economist, Montgomery County, says it's best not to interfere with your child's squabbles. With very young children, a quarrel is often over and forgotten within a matter of seconds.

Mrs. Stevens has included information on developing family relationships in a learning packet called "Toddler Topics." The packet is designed to help parents of preschoolers in rearing their children and include information on children's fears, parent/child communications, budgeting, health and other timely topics.

To get your free copies of the learning "Toddler Topics," call or write the Montgomery County Penn State Cooperative Extension Service office, 400 Markley Street, Norristown, Pennsylvania 19401. (277-0574)

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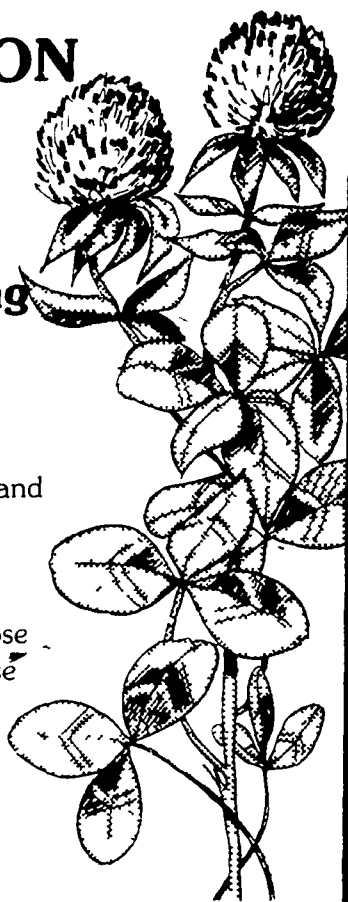
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