



**On being
a farm wife
- And other
hazards**

Joyce Bupp

Every day is Mother's Day here on the farm. Or at least it's seemed that way the last few weeks.

There's a mother hanging out in every corner. Included is the usual line-up of mothers that progress through the dairy barn maternity pen, thrilling us anew each time we witness the miracle of birth. Admittedly, sometimes in the rush of things to do, we forget momentarily to appreciate the miraculous instinct that directs mothers to care for their young. What is it that tells a cow to clean and lick her calf, stimulating the exhausted infant to lift a wet and wobbling head to that maternal touch?

But with Spring comes a parade of other mothers and (much to the youngsters' delight) the calf barn is doing double-duty as a kitten nursery. Wedged in one corner, in what looks like an impossibly uncomfortable nest, are five soft black and striped tiny cats, eyes just opening.

Down at the other end of the building, a hollow in the straw cradles another nest holding only one baby. It belongs to a first-time mother, who, like most of us when we were new mothers, was somewhat bewildered over how to go about this new responsibility. We

finally convinced her to just lay down in the straw and let nature take its course.

Now, would-be motherhood meant only frustration for the white duck that perched on a nest of eggs in the barn for the past two months. When moved, nest and all, out of the barn because she'd squatted in the way of hay-feeding progress, Mom Duck stubbornly went right back to the task at hand just outside the barn door. Neither wind, rain, hot sun, feed delivery trucks, cattle trailers nor bicycle riding children deterred her. Even an appearance, nest included, at a recent petting zoo, refused to discourage her. Please someone, how do you explain to a determined duck that what she's doing is useless since we don't have a Father Duck?

But this year's winner of the Farm Mother of the Year just has to go to the plucky two-pound banty hen that has steadfastly defended her nest in the wagon shed from maurauding dogs, arrogant cats, nosy children and busybody adults. Truly a perfectionist, she hatched out every single one of her 17 eggs and is now run ragged trying to keep after a brood of black, gray, brown, white and yellow cotton balls on legs

**Cats show an interest
in Lancaster County**

NEW TRIPOLI — Cats, typical barn cats, seem to have a special interest in Lancaster County.

In fact, if the observations of Mrs. Kermit C. Loch, R 1 New Tripoli, are any indication, there may be a major migration of cats underway from points north into Lancaster County.

Sources near the barnyard have not been able to determine why the cats are hitching rides to Lancaster County, but on several occasions cats have been observed on their trips south.

Most of the cats seem to be hitching rides on hay trucks and other farm vehicles heading for Lancaster County auctions. Observers speculate that the trucks may be part of some above-ground railroad for the cats' migration.

For instance, Kermit Loch, R 1 New Tripoli, took a load of hay from his Lehigh County farm to the Green Dragon Auction in Ephrata.

After the auction was over he went to the Isaac Esh farm to unload and found three kittens and their mother still in the load.

The kittens apparently were born overnight in that load of hay and rode all the way from Lehigh County to Lancaster County.

Why a mother would take her newborn babes on such a journey has not been

Which reminds me to be thankful for many things on this Mother's Day weekend: thankful for our own two beloved and wonderful mothers, thankful for the joy of being a mother; and particularly thankful that I'm not the mother of 17.

determined. But the cats were received happily by the children.

Then last week's Good's Auction in Leola, Ronny Snyder, R1 Kempton, found a black male cat on top of his load of hay.

The Berks Countian was stopped by a woman and asked if he knew he had a cat on his load. He investigated and uncovered the animal.

The black cat was put into a box and returned again to Berks County, unsuccessful in his attempt to cross county lines unnoticed.

While two similar incidents within a week's time may not be proof of a massive invasion of cats to Lancaster County, remember, you read it here first.

And to all farmers outside the county—please check your loads. We have enough barn cats, thanks.

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