

# Don't let your \$ go up in smoke

BY DEBBIE KOONTZ

LANCASTER — Most everybody has experienced the feelings a fire can bring — it not the sense of fear and depression caused by the screaming fire engines, the flashing red lights, the loud roar as the building slowly topples to the ground and the shivers running through your body — then the feelings of loss and desperation as you stand by the charred ruins afterward.

It doesn't have to be a personal tragedy to experience this depression. It's almost as if a fire breeds this atmosphere and that any onlookers, whether they knew the owners or not, are meant to suffer.

Most often uttered after a disaster such as this is, "What a waste; what a senseless waste."

Unfortunately, these thoughts have credibility in that they usually are true. Most fires could have been prevented with a little care and time. And when we're talking about safety as compared to complete destruction of a barn

used to milk those 80 cows, or a poultry operation housing 50,000 layers, or even a machinery shed used to hold thousands of dollars of machinery — wouldn't a little time spent 'cleaning up,' 'straightening up,' and making plans be worth a few hours or even day's lost time?

Dairy farmers, for instance, have little time to stand by and mourn after the damage is done — those cows still have to be milked; that is, if you were able to save them. And though most rural neighbors have an old fashioned 'close bond' which would obligate them to milk your cows, it hardly makes up for the inconvenience, loss and work you both suffer from such arrangements. In the end, even with your neighbor's help, could you and would you rebuild and start all over?

Poultry farmers, among others, have a fear of grass fires. According to the Insurance Bulletin published by the United Egg Producers, fire losses to poultry houses in the past 24 months due to 'minor' grass fires resulted to

nearly one million dollar's damage.

According to the bulletin, "the grass catches fire from a stray match or cigarette or even a hot catalytic converter on the underside of a truck or car. The grass then burns up to the side of the poultry house. The metal exterior of the house won't burn, of course; but if the fire gets up close to the wall and there is a small opening which allows it to get into the styrofoam or polyurethane insulation, the house is an inferno within minutes. You are urged to eliminate grass and weeds for at least a six foot area around your barns."

No farm or home is ever completely safe from fire, but a few safeguards could mean the difference between safety and total ruin.

The most important fire precaution is to have adequate insurance. When it comes to buying insurance to protect yourself and your farm, this is no time to become a penny-pincher.

In the long run, you may lose more than you'll ever be able to match again. And though you may be the most cautious person in your area, you can't protect your home when an arsonist decides to strike.

According to Bob Yoder from the Old Guard Mutual Insurance Company in Lancaster, a "high percentage" of fires could be attributed to arson.

"Barns are especially appealing to arsonists because they will create such a spectacular blaze and the arsonist thinks he won't be hurting anybody," Yoder said. "It doesn't make any difference to the arsonist if the farmer has insurance or not."

To make a barn a little less appealing to an arsonist, Yoder suggests making your barn look "well taken care of and well maintained. A barking dog is always a good idea — not necessarily a biting one, but a barking one. Collies are good for this. Also report any suspicious cars in the area. If unfamiliar people stop and ask strange questions, just jot down their car license number. It may be very helpful later."

Try to make your barn and sheds look the way they should — as if they provide a very important role on the farm. Keep them looking

clean, new and functional.

Other preventative measures you can take are:

Safeguard your home. You have to live here — and whether you believe it or not, that's more important than the cows and the pigs. Keep the attic and the cellar clean and all burnable materials away from the furnace.

Next, have your chimney periodically cleaned.

Replace worn cords in your work sheds, your house and your barn. They can cause short circuits, which lead to fires.

Make sure wiring is done by a certified electrician.

Install smoke detectors. They're relatively cheap.

Have fire extinguishers handy all over the farm.

Learn the differences in types of fires — is it a gas fire? an electrical fire? Can you fight it with water or do you need chemicals? Are they handy?

Don't store wet hay.

Don't smoke around your barn and don't be afraid to ask others not to smoke.

Make sure lightning rods are grounded.

Autumn is a beautiful time of year on any farm — keep it that way by making it as safe as it is beautiful.



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## FIRE DESTROYS PRACTICE FIRE PREVENTION

### Md. holds gypsy moth meeting

ANNAPOLIS, Md — The Maryland Department of Agriculture will conduct a site-specific Scoping Session relating to a proposed 1982 Cooperative Gypsy Moth Suppression Program in Cecil, Harford, Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick, Washington and Montgomery Counties.

The session will be held at the Baltimore County Extension

Service Office at 9811 Van Buren Lane, Cockeysville, on Monday, October 26, 1981. It will begin at 12:30 p.m.

Persons requiring detailed directions to the site, or more information about the meeting, should call 301-289-2957. Paul G. Bystrak Supervisor, Gypsy Moth Control Maryland Department of Agriculture.

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