



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

Joyce Bupp

Thinking about sending Christmas cards?

Better hurry. Your friends could still be waiting for them on New Year's Day.

At least that's the delivery service a couple of hundred Mid-Atlantic area dairy families have come to expect.

Dairy farmers get their paychecks via the mails, sent out from their cooperatives, or private handlers. The bulk of us receive only monthly checks, although some accounts are set up for bi-monthly payouts.

With agriculture such a credit intensive business, there are few farmers who don't have some regular loan payments rolling due for machinery, cows, crop expenses, not to mention the mortgage on the old place. And, likely, those payments for dairymen are set up to pretty well coincide with the receipt of the milk check.

This farm wife, for instance, regularly plans to be near the mailbox on the second day following milkcheck mailings. Like most paychecks in these days

of tight economics, it's spent before it even passes a bank teller's hands.

So when several days had passed and many of our cooperative's

members had still not received their November check recently, they were plenty upset

The checks had been pre-sorted, stamped with first-class postage, and hand delivered to the Baltimore postal facility. By contrast, some members in extreme western Maryland received their's the following morning, while nearly a week later, others were still lost.

A massive headache of stop-payments and reissuance of checks, hand deliveries and various emergency procedures bailed out dozens of farm families faced with loan payments and land tax penalties, plus the black mark against credit that goes with late payments.

The vanished checks eventually turned up in bags of third-class "junk mail", which normally is mailed out at just pennies

The most aggravating part of the problem is that it's happened again and again.

Of course, there's a solution for better service. Raise the cost of stamps. Look what that's always done for better service in the past.

In fairness to the Postal Service, their rural post office personnel seem considerably more efficient, and genuinely concerned.

One of my favorite local post-mistresses, when asked if she would have to shut down during the recent period when the government literally ran out of operating money, replied that she guessed they paid her enough that she could come in for a day or two not knowing whether her next paycheck would ever arrive.

I nominate her for Postmaster General.

Patches wins tractor contest

LEBANON — Cedar Crest FFA members Dale Zuck and Mark Patches recently competed in the Area FFA Tractor Driving Contest at Blue Mountain High School.

The contest consisted of two courses. On the first course the contestants had to back a manure spreader into a stall and drive it through an obstacle course. The second course consisted of backing a wagon from one stall into another. There was also a written test for all contestants.

The contest ended with Mark Patches placing first with 237 points and Dale Zuck finishing third with 255 points.



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