

On being a farm wife - And other hazards Joyce Bupp

"I wonder," sighed a tired cattle caretaker one day earlier this week, "why people come back to this Farm Show year after year."

"Well, why do you come back every year?" I tossed back.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Beats me."

On the spot, from the middle of the dairy cattle barn, we took an instant survey of other exhibitors who happened to pass by.

One just tossed a sarcastic laugh over his shoulder at the question, as he headed off to do the afternoon milking and clean-up chores for his show string.

Another replied, "You know, I've been wondering the same thing."

Still another reason it was good advertisement for his family's milk sales business.

"Why DO you come back every year?" came the same persistent question back in my direction again.

After a couple of hours pondering that, I've come up with several reasons.

— Because I'm fascinated with the feel of water filling my rubber boot when our son accidentally turns the hose my way as we scrub his 4-H heifer.

— Because I need an excuse to concoct hamburger barbecue, or chili, or ham and string beans, at 7 a.m., so the crockpot feels needed.

— Because trotting across that giant parking lot at zero degrees, with a minus-40 wind chill, is stimulating, refreshing and clears the lungs.

— Because doing laundry during the 11 o'clock nightly news helps keep me awake to find out how cold it will be the next morning, so I can lay in bed wondering how many new pipes at the barn will be frozen solid.

— Because straw, hay, sawdust, soggy jeans, unmatched mittens, and assorted vests and coats strewn into every room of the house add that lived-in look.

Actually, I can think of two better reasons.

Friends. And fellowship. Visiting again with old friends we seldom see, and making new ones. Chatting with neighbors. Simply being with other farm people. And, of course, the challenge of competition in the showing.

That's why we go to the Farm Show.

And that's all the reasons we really need.

U.S. farmers raise 'rubber' plants

ARCADIA, Cal. — A plant that could satisfy much of the nation's demand for natural rubber may be ready for large-scale cultivation by 1985, according to researchers at the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum, Arcadia, California.

Dennis Perry, Himayat Naqvi, and George Hanson, plant breeders at the public facility, said they have increased the latex content of guayule, a native American rubber-bearing plant, to the point where they predict that in four to five years an annual yield of 1,000 pounds of rubber per acre can be achieved. This yield should be sufficient to make guayule growing financially attractive to farmers with semi-arid land in the southwestern United States and other parts of the world.

Increased yields have been achieved through selection within USDA strains developed during World War II guayule breeding programs and from selections made among native populations in northern Mexico.

Another factor that significantly increases the rubber content in guayule wood and bark in selective spraying of chemicals on the

growing shrubs. The researchers said that hybridizing guayule with close relatives has resulted in increased vigor and disease tolerance.

The house mouse, an elusive little thief

NEWARK, Del. — The common house mouse is not a very imposing creature. It's only about six inches long — mostly tail — weighs about three-fourths of an ounce, and spends most of its life pretty well out of sight. As a result, it often goes unnoticed, until a dog food bag stored in the garage develops a hole, or until a basket of knitting on the top shelf of a closet is suddenly turned into a mouse nursery.

Mus musculus, the house mouse name, means "little thief," and it describes this wanderer from Asia perfectly, says Delaware Extension entomologist Frank Boys. Today "Mus" is found from the tropics to the arctic regions all over the world. Because the mouse is so small and requires so little food, it has spread much faster than rats. It probably has the widest distribution of any mammal except man.

In order to control this pest, one should know something about its breeding potential and habits, says Boys. Mice are extremely fast reproducers. Since the gestation period is only about 21 days, a single female could produce as many as 14 litters per year. Litter size averages about eight young. Females can rebreed a few hours after giving birth. Mice also tend to have community nests, and sometimes as many as 50 young have been found together.

The size of a mouse's territory depends upon the physical

arrangement of its environment and the number of other mice in the area. A mouse might not travel more than ten feet from its nest if food is close by and/or if there are many mice in the area. Some mice may spend their entire lives in a pallet of feed.

House mice can survive long periods without drinking water. If their food contains some water, they don't need any drinking water. However, water baits are readily accepted.

The house mouse reacts to change by exploring it immediately, often investigating traps even though they are unbaited. In fact, your control success may be increased if you make constant changes in the mouse's environment. Changing baits or the placement of baits or traps helps. Mice also travel along walls or objects and in shadows. Where studs and sills are exposed, the mice will run on the sill and go around each stud; rats will travel on the floor. Traps and baits should be placed along their normal pathways.

If you're not sure whether you have more than one mouse in your dwelling, look for small holes in walls and doors, for tiny droppings on floors and rafters, and for feeding signs. When you see mice scurrying for cover as you enter the house, you know you have a problem, says Boys. Don't fall under the common delusion that

mice don't do much damage and therefore aren't worth controlling.

Eliminating places where mice can live, and making food unavailable to them, are the only permanent control measures. Keep the premises clean! Avoid piles of trash and accumulations of junk. Pay particular attention to the disposal of garbage and trash. Place it in garbage cans, not plastic bags, and keep them closed until the regular time for dumping.

Food placed out-of-doors for pets and birds should be watched. Clean up scraps regularly, and place bird food in a mouse-proof feeder.

Try to keep rodents outside buildings; close as many small openings into the building as you can. Unfortunately, mice can squeeze through a quarter-inch hole. Cover surfaces that mice could gnaw through, such as window frames and the bottom of doors, with metal flanking or hardware cloth.

The small breakback and choker-loop traps can be used where there are signs of mice. In buildings, place traps along the wall, with trigger end toward the baseboard, or against boxes or other objects at intervals of two to three feet. Many traps should be used if mice are abundant. If a mouse hole is found, place a trap about nine inches on either side. Bacon, peanut butter, gumdrops, or rolled oats are effective baits (cheese is not). A little loose bait should be placed under the trigger to catch mice skulking at robbing traps. A string or light wire from the trap to some nearby object will prevent a prowling cat from carrying the trapped mouse away, and will also keep a mouse caught by the tail or foot from crawling into hiding.

If you use poisoned bait, be sure to prepare a lethal dose, as a sublethal dose will only make the mouse sick, and it will avoid the bait thereafter.

In cases of heavy mouse infestations, after all control efforts on your part have failed, contact a reputable pest control operator, preferably a member of a state or national pest control association.



Lancaster Co. Society 2

Lancaster Co. Society 2 held their Christmas social recently at the home of Peg Barrett of Penryn. Twenty members attended.

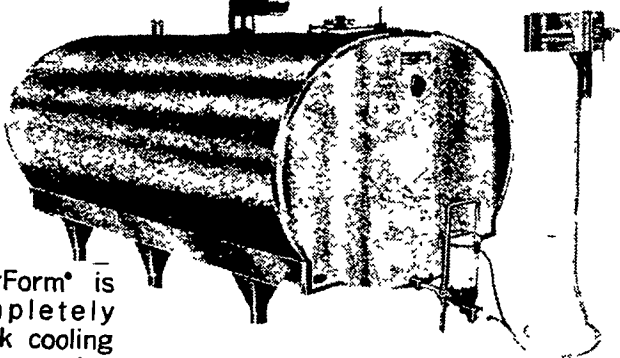
Following games, the members voted to support several projects:

LARC, the blind, teen challenge and Easter Seals.

The next meeting will be January 9 and will be held at the home of Edna Loose.

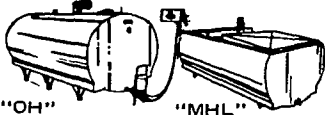
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