



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

Cussing at cows, warns a Russian folklore specialist, is partly the reason that Soviet milk production has been steadily declining in recent years.

With U.S. milk production continuing to head the other direction, what does that say about how our domestic dairymen feel about, and treat, their matronly milkers?

Not that a cow or two might not win a few choice words now and then on most any farm. (On this farm, however, cussing - period - is frowned upon.)

But in every crowd of cows, just as in any crowd of people, there are those couple of characters than unendingly try your patience and somehow manage to be outstandingly ornery.

Etta, a heifer near the far end of

the stall barn here would probably win the "Aggravator of the Year" statuette if a vote would be taken at the moment.

Excitable Etta might be a more appropriate label. Etta works up in a lather when she sees milkers approaching. Not upset. Just excited.

She's also doggone nosy, and has the habit of sticking her broad black and white nose under the belly of her neighbor, Arlene, as that cow is being prepped for milking.

Arlene, at the same time, is not you most unflappable animal, and doesn't cotton too well to being

poked and prodded with such intimacy from her nosy neighbor. Arlene's reaction to Etta's little peek-a-boo-beneath-the-belly game is to send the milkers flying. Occasionally she'll connect with the operator as well.

On an angle across the alleyway is another interesting youngster. Amazing, sometimes, how a cow name so perfectly fits the individual.

Jig is our current dancer in the herd. All we'd need to do is outfit her with a colorful kilt and a bag pipe, and we could enter her choreographed routine around the stall in a Scottish folk festival. Still, Jig's no problem to milk - unless you have trouble hitting four moving targets with the teat cups.

And, then, there's Dee, a newcomer to the herd, and a specialist in head and neck aerobic exercises.

Dee is over-friendly to male milkers, routinely yanking off their hats to lick the silage-dusted heads beneath.

Women, however, get a different treatment. Charlie, our super-duper herdsman, speculated that Dee dislikes women. She innocently waits until one of us two-legged females gets within whacking distance, and then swings that muscular, hard-skulled head with the force of a battle-ax.

Dee is not my favorite cow. Interestingly, Dee, Etta and Arlene are all on the same side of

the barn. Guess which side I generally keep to when I milk?

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