

On being a farm wife - And other hazards Joyce Bupp



One thing that farmers soon learn to depend on in this business is not to depend on anything. That includes anything from fickle government policies to a normally gentle animal that turns vicious with a newborn by her side, from the July thundercloud

that materializes instantly over a field of dried hay to the brief flurry that develops into the decade's worst blizzard. Even something so seemingly simple as a trip hauling cattle can be fraught with unexpected surprises.

Like a recent expedition experienced by a dairyman friend from a neighboring county. For this delivery trip, he loaded up one large, old bull, and one little bull calf. Midway through the journey, the old bull's head suddenly appeared where it had no business being, about the same time a passing motorist honked a horn alert. Charging back to the trailer after a screeching halt, the dismayed dairymen found one open door, and one big bull, but no little bull. Spinning around with the rig at the first handy spot, he retraced his tracks back through town. Sure enough, there by the side of the road stood two young ladies, bull calf in tow. Gratefully offering them a small reward, the dairyman reclaimed the errant passenger and continued on his trip. His recounting to us of that story

brought back similar memories of the farmer's about a trip he, too, made sometime ago that took an unexpected twist. Coming to a stop at a town traffic light, he noticed the cattle trailer door swinging open about the same second a stranger appeared with the same news. Before he could dash back and slam shut the door that had popped open, out jumped a bovine not necessarily known for her calm and gentle disposition. In the ensuing excitement of the next several minutes, she toured neighboring urban yards, parking lots and startled her share of innocents passing by. About a half-dozen hardy volunteer chasers seemed to appear from thin air and a plan emerged. The hauling rig would be backed up to a yard where a handy gap in a border hedge would serve as a makeshift loading chute. Needless to say, everyone concurred on this idea but the cow,

who managed to slip by the roadblocks and depart once again through the neighborhood, heels flying. By the time at least a dozen urban cowboys, as well as local law enforcement officials, had turned up on the scene of the chase. Eventually, the escapee was surrounded by this group of overwhelming numbers, aided by a resourceful truck driver who maneuvered his rig into the spot where the fleeing bovine had previously split. Thus, the cross-country marathon of beast and man came to a satisfactory, and blessedly relieved, conclusion, and all went their own way. So, while a fast-food chain has made this phrase national catchword, it was probably a farmer, spotting an open door on his cattle hauling rig, who said it first: "Where's the beef?"

Cattle lotteries scheduled

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Department of Agriculture will hold two lotteries March 15 to allocate quarantine space for importing breeding cattle: one for South America and another for those originating in Europe. However, the lotteries

will take place only if people request space for at least 50 animals, said John K. Atwell, deputy administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. He said the maximum number of spaces that will be allotted is 230. Applications to take part in the lottery are due March 10. Applicants or their certified representatives must attend the lottery, which will be held at 9 a.m. March 15 in Room 643A, Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, Md., near Washington, D.C. The import center is a special quarantine facility operated by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service on an island near Key West, Fla. Operation of the center permits the importation of healthy breeding stock from countries that have foreign animal diseases — such as foot-and-mouth disease — that are not present in the United States. Animals are quarantined there for 90 days.

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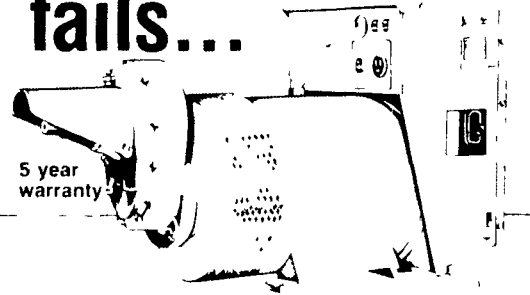
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