

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



Velvety black presses to the windowpanes, kept safely at bay by the cozy golden glow of the living room lamps.

Dark. Late. A slight breeze ruffles the branches against the porch roof of the quiet farmhouse.

Upstairs, only the soft breathing of children settled in for the night. They slumber through the muted background downstairs noises of TV or stereo, the only other sound the soft rustling of the sheets of the newspaper periodically turning.

On the braided rug a cat snoozes in curled repose. Just outside the door dozes the family's dog, one ear cocked for sounds so small only he can hear to sound an alert.

Still, an emptiness pervades this scene of domestic tranquility and peace.

Absent from the couch is the usual slumbering figure, stretched in weariness, still in faded jeans and dusty plaid shirt.

The farmers are planting late tonight.

Chafing over moisture-mushy fields, they've watched the land grow colorful with the thick growth of eager grass and dandelion volunteers.

Finally, a day dawns with the splash of sunrays instead of raindrops. Farmers pace their shops, grease guns in hand, re-preparing equipment long in readiness.

Pickups creak under balanced stacks of seed, fertilizer, assorted-sized planter rings, extra fuel containers and miscellaneous tools.

All is waiting for that afternoon hour when the rising wind brings the announcement that maybe - just maybe - the top inches of soil have dried enough not to immediately plug the planter with fingers of mud.

Then, into the dark night they roll, the drone of throbbing engines and shining specks of light disappearing as contoured fields curl around distant curving strips, to appear later as soundless pin-points of lights floating out in the blackness.

Soon, silence and endless dark, as men and machines move away to more isolated fields, out of sight - but not out of mind.

Late. Too late. Where are they? Why haven't they returned yet? What broke? What jammed? Bugged down in a wet spot in bottomground? An accident? A rollover?

The intensity of the imagined disaster grows as the minutes tick off on the kitchen clock.

Calm yourself, farm wives and mothers order their jagged nerves. They know these fields, this equipment. This is exactly where they want to be - they live for it from year to year.

Still, within the mind of waiting women, the uneasy knot tangling the peace of mind persistently duels with the years of experience that say all is well.

Just as you debate mentally the sensibility of just going to bed against the desire to jump in the car and take a quick run out through the field road to check, a hum of motors punctures your concern and the prickly, nagging worries instantly vanish.

Few sounds are more reassuring than the roar of machines returning from the fields late, late at night.

It isn't easy returning to the fields to plant late, after already putting in a double shift-worth of hours farming.

Sometimes, it isn't easy waiting for them to come back, either.

**Berks Dairy Princess**

(Continued from Page B17)

Award given by the Kiwanis Club of Reading. Tammy plans to attend school to become a veterinary technician and work with animals the rest of her life.

"We could pick anyone of them and have an excellent dairy princess," Donald Duncan, Berks County Farmers Association president, stated, of the other contestants. The other contestants included: Tammy Moll, R1, Hamburg; Cathleen Ohlinger, R1, Mohrsville; and Rose Steinly, R1, Mohrsville. Each contestant

received gifts from the Berks County Dairy Holstein Associations and received gift certificates from Brown's Inc., Sinking Spring.

The 1984 Princess and her alternate also received gifts sponsored by the local businesses.

Dick Bailey, Bucks County extension director, served as the Toastmaster for the evening. The judges included: Charlene Rank, former state dairy princess, Ed Arnold, Lebanon County Commissioner, and Dieter Krieg, Farmshine Editor.

**Series offers childcare tips**

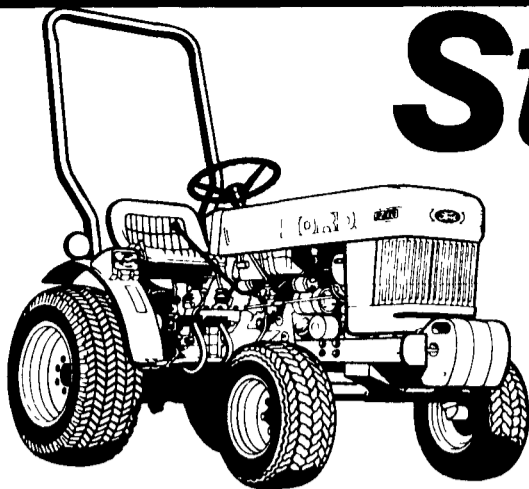
STATE COLLEGE — To be classified as a daycare giver, you do not need special training or a degree in early childhood education. People who provide regular care for children under the age of 16 and who are not related to these children are daycare givers.

This title brings with it many responsibilities, both to yourself and to the children you are taking care of. To help with these needs, Penn State Cooperative Extension Service is producing a series of learn-at-home packets entitled "Children in Your Care, in Your Home."

Each of the nine installments also discusses various organizations and support groups available to daycare givers.

The series gives tips on running a business in your home so that you can continue to provide quality care without financial difficulties as well as some of the more serious aspects of child care such as how to tell if a child is being abused.

The packets, which also give advice on how to feed children and how to keep them amused, are free and available through your county home economist. Call Jackie Cook at 253-5970 ext. 114



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