

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



How can you resist such an appeal?

It begins with the eyes. Such large eyes, wide with innocence. Shy, yet curious. Eager, but uncertain.

These eyes, bright buttons of interest, peer from the safe haven offered by the oval-shaped center of a cement block half.

Framed in a cloud of misty gray fluff, these eyes beg us to come and play, yet withdraw into the hiding spot as we approach.

Gingerly, you poke a finger toward the softness of a tiny paw. It promptly bats back at you and the game has begun.

Once again, we have all fallen

prey to the epidemic of affection generated by a nest of adorable kittens.

How can you resist such an appeal?

Born in the cozy confines of an old corrugated metal trash can, kept at the barn for holding used baler twine, the litter of adorables never reached the point of really fearing people.

Each time any of us passed by, feeding the cows or sweeping the feed troughs, a stop just had to be made to chat with proud Mother Gray about her family of five.

When the confines of the trash can overflowed with growing kittens, the youngsters built them

a spacious living area within the hay bales, where the playful antics of the babies could be enjoyed. But too many interested visitors, including the dog who loves to watch kittens, apparently irked their devoted mother.

One day they disappeared, hauled off to some location which none of us could uncover for a while.

Her destination, we finally discovered, had been a back corner of the bull pen, jealously guarded by about 1,500 pounds of macho, he-man Holstein muscle. One misstep of those hard hooves on a tiny kitten and...well, it was just too much for any of us to think about.

Figuring humans knew more than cats, we set off to relocate the kittens. First, we set up housekeeping for them in a vacant calf hutch. She carted them back to the bull.

Next we tried a temporarily-

empty calf pen. Again, back they went to muscle-man. This cat's no novice — she know's full well that no kids, and few adults, go poking around in that particular pen.

Time cures all. As all children do, the kittens have cut the apron strings and relocated themselves to where they want to play. That happens to be smack in the middle of the calf-and-heifer raising area, where miscellaneous boxes, buckets and tools offer a really neat playground.

Like between the tines of the bamboo rake used for cleaning out the heifers' trough. Or the broom handle, handy for climbing up and down like a fireman's pole. Best of all is a T-joint of plastic drainage pipe, a perfect kitten play-tunnel.

I sit on the old well cover for a moment and Marco Polo (the explorer of the bunch) crawls into my lap, purring with a vengeance. A brother (sister?) wraps tiny

paws around my ankle and unties my sneaker strings.

How can you resist such an appeal?

And they wonder why it takes me so long to do my barn chores.

Berks County FFA

The Berks County FFA held its election of officers at a recent meeting. The new officers include; president, Rod Stoltzfus, Twin Valley; vice-president, Kirk Fisher, Oley Valley; secretary, Carol Dreisbach, Hamburg; assistant secretary, Kevin Schlegal, Oley Valley; and treasurer, Henry Seidel, Hamburg.

Other officers include reporter, Joanne Kunkel, Kutztown; sentinel, Greg Musser, Conrad Weiser; chaplain, Connie Strunk, Tulpehocken; junior advisor, Beth Morgan, Twin Valley, and parliamentarian, John Sonnen, Conrad Weiser.

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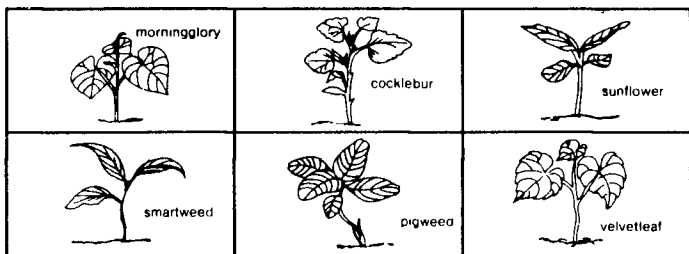
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