

On being a farm wife — And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



Equality. We've heard that word so much over the past decade, as the feminist movement continues the crusade for men and women to be treated as equals in rights, in services, on the job and in the marketplace.

Most farm women of my acquaintance, while leaning toward feminism, aren't die-harders about the issue. That's undoubtedly somewhat due to the fact that most of us are already doing such "manly" things as helping to tend livestock and crops along with the garden, yard and household.

There are, though, some farm jobs that just naturally seem to fall to one sex or the other. Never have I, thank goodness, been asked to service a tractor (I once greased a disk before heading out over the field), crawl inside the bottom of the silo for repair work, or help to mechanically stir up the manure lagoon.

Our very "macho" son contends that certain chores are "women's work." Nevertheless he hasn't completely avoided being forced to occasionally pick up his muddy shoes or help set the table for supper.

And one job that everyone readily leaves to me is handling the calf chores. In fact, they're often referred to as "mom's calves."

Am I complaining? Never. I love

those baby calves.

Surveys have recently shown that baby farm animals raised by females consistently show a higher rate of survival and better thriftiness and health than similar ones cared for by males. (Before you men calf feeders hit the ceiling, there are doubtless some exceptions. You may be one of them.)

No matter how tired you are, or frustrated, or disgusted, just stepping into that calf nursery is enough to give you what's currently referred to in a popular country song as an "attitude adjustment." All those bright, shining, alert pairs of eyes eagerly watch your every move, and bawls of welcome sing out.

Each one, like a class of children, is an individual. Some are exceptionally loving, and there are a few, always, that seem bent on creating aggravation. Sometimes just their unusual patterns of black and white color are fascinating and really set certain ones aside as individuals. One little heifer born here in late summer has long black eyelashes over one eye, and long silky white lashes over the other, lending a sort of endearing, crooked look to her face.

Yoko, one of the older nursery heifers, bawled for her first several days there in what was probably the loudest voice I've ever heard come out of a calf's

mouth. Her mother once belonged to a group of investment cattle owned by members of the Beatles singing group — maybe that's where her loud music ability originated.

After Yoko finally came to grips with the fact that she and her mama were separated for good, she pouted and sulked in the corner for a couple more days before settling down to behave like a good calf should.

Pushover should have instead been named Push Around. Day in and day out she clamps her jaws shut like a vise, and you have to

pry them apart to get her to take the bottle. After two sips of the warm milk, Pushover nearly flattens you in her eagerness to drink. After two weeks of this, you think she'd finally learn?

Then there's Marvina. Marvina's mother was the proverbial "holy terror" heifer, shown as a 4-H calf in competition, but never really taming down into a puppy-like pet like most 4-H calves do. Then, to boot, her sire is well-known in the industry as having fathered some extremely high-strung, jittery animals.

Thus, Marvina was fully expected to be one of those calves that keeps at least one eye on the feeder at every second, waiting until just the right moment to lash out with one of those sharp, hard little hooves.

What a surprise when she turned out instead to be a real honey, who has to be awakened for her bottle, and then lays right back down and goes to sleep, never making a sound.

That's the neat thing about animals. You just never know how they'll turn out.

Wayne Co. to start craft group

HONESDALE — The crafts connection is the connection for you to make if you're a hobbyist or a "crafty-type." This fair-weather group is forming for the purpose of exchanging ideas, showing and telling about your work, and learning more about improving a craft or hobby.

The group will also plan and arrange bus trips and outings to various craft shows and places of enrichment. Meetings will not be held in the snow months.

The first get-together will be held on Monday, Oct. 22 at 7:30 p.m. in the Extension Office in the Wayne County Courthouse, Honesdale.

A chairman, secretary and treasurer will probably be the only officers necessary. Different committees will be set up to plan activities. As this is an enrichment program sponsored by the Wayne County Cooperative Extension Service, plans will be implemented by the extension.

For more information call Jackie Cook at 253-5970 ext. 114.

Insects munch

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previous mountain pine beetle outbreaks. The dead trees fuel a massive forest furnace, which needs only a spark to become an inferno."

McGregor's forecast proved tragically accurate when August blazes seared thousands of acres of Montana forests.

Potential Harvesting

If infestation is caught early enough, the devastated yellow pines of Texas can be harvested and thus not totally lost, because they are usually more accessible than the remote giants of the West. Then a buffer strip cut around the infested stand will usually stop the spread of the beetles.

But if the infestation has gone too far, the answer, in forestry parlance, is to "cut and leave."

The spruce budworm poses a different sort of problem, particularly in Maine, the nation's most heavily forested state, where lumbering is the principal industry.

Insects can't read boundary markers, and the 100 million budworm-infested acres extend far into the conifers of Canada. In both the East and the West, a joint Canadian-U.S. program is searching for ways to control the pests.

All these omnivorous insects are, to some extent, cyclical. The extent of their ravaging varies widely from year to year. In

general, the foresters and scientists agree, 1984 promises to be a year of less than staggering losses.

But foresters think in long terms. Of gypsy moths, for example, Hofacker says, "It's going to be bad somewhere every year. Some years it will be worse than others. It's extremely explosive. We aren't very good at predicting what it's going to do. It can be relatively rare, and the next year there's just bugs all over the place."

'Ain't Seen Nothin'

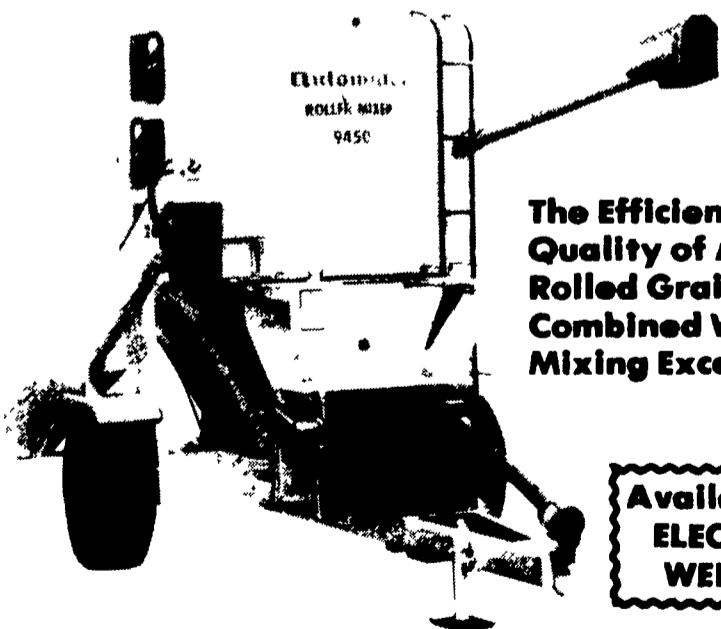
Despite the defoliation the gypsy moth already has caused on its southward march, "We ain't seen nothin' yet," says Hofacker. "It's the vast hardwood forest that extends down the Appalachians way into the South that really hasn't been attacked yet." Inevitably, it will be.

One of those who takes the long view is Dr. Gerald W. Anderson, director of the Forest Service's insect and disease research. Although he recognizes the problem of lag time — perhaps 10 or 15 years to come up with a solution to a particular problem — he is not pessimistic about the future of our forests.

"The trees out there are remarkable in terms of their ability to endure," he says. "They have to be very competitive. They're in a fixed position. They have to endure drought. There are just all kinds of things that can challenge them along the way."

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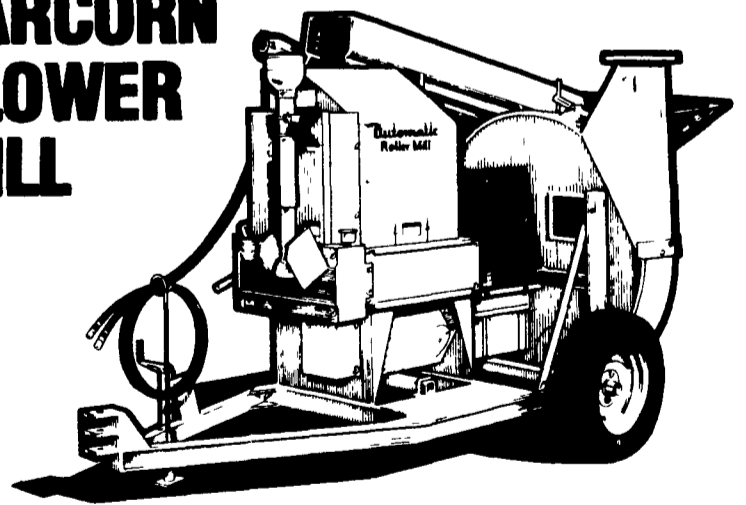
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