

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

Joyce Bupp



Lick your plate clean. Grab your neighbor's dinner if she isn't chowing down fast enough. Think of nothing but eating, and bawl

your head off if the food doesn't show up right on the dot.

Unforgivable eating habits in humans. But tolerable - even encouraged - in the hungry, high-producing world of the modern dairy cow. Long ago I concluded that a cow's supreme goal and satisfaction from life lies in the gastronomic pleasures. Of course, what else would you expect from a beast equipped by nature with four stomachs?

Once, cows had to forage for a living, chomping grass in summer but making do with tough, dried stems and whatever else they could find during the long, cold season.

Today's pampered producers have it all carried to them, fresh, several times daily. It's the epitome of hand-to-mouth existence, with the human

caretakers trained to do the back labor while Mrs. Cow simply maneuvers her muzzle, and rechews her cud while contemplating the intricate mysteries of life. Meanwhile, Mother Nature miraculously converts cow food into one nearly perfect for most humans.

Each cow in our stall barn has her own four feet or so of eating space, swept down daily to bare ceramic-tile cleanliness. In every twenty-four hours, she gets frequent refills of such gourmet treats as haylage, corn silage, high-moisture corn, roasted soybean meal, protein supplements, fresh dry hay, and diet balancing vitamins and minerals.

But is she content? You bet she's not.

For just beyond the pipes that separate her on both sides from her neighbors lies a veritable corn silage, high moisture corn, etc, etc corn silage, high moisture corn, etc, etc.

The same stuff you say? Certainly. But it's an acknowledged fact that food beyond the pipe always tastes better. (Known as the grass-is-greener syndrome.)

Given the size of a cow's head, plus several added inches for what seems like an elastic tongue, plus extra length obtained by crouching on the knees and wedging the head under and around the pipe, render each cow another three feet or so of feeding space on each side. That's to be fought over with the neighbor, naturally.

"If you eat someone else's food first, you still have your own to nibble latter," philosophizes the farmer, on a theory based on solid

observation of two decades plus.

Because eating is so important, we use it as a persuader for cows to return to their stalls after daily exercise in the pasture is over.

But recently, as the haylage units were empty just prior to loads of fresh ready to go in, and corn silage on a sort of ration basis, we substituted dry hay one afternoon for putting the cows into the barn.

What that innocent decision wreaked was madhouse. For awhile there I feared that we might have harvested in the hay some of that illegal greenery that farmers are more and more frequently finding planted by anonymous gardeners in isolated corners of distant fields.

Even the most calm and steady members of the herd took to jumping in a stall, grabbing a bite of hay, furiously munching on the run, dashing into another stall, grabbing another bite, and heading back down through the barn with wisps of green wriggling from the corners of their muzzles while they busily chewed.

What normally takes maybe ten minutes turned into what seemed like a marathon, with patience wearing as ragged as the remnants of hay left in some of the stalls while the havoc was underway.

Eventually, even such individuals as Hardheaded Hazel and Wicked Wanda were located in their proper parking places, and noisily crunching what remained of the hay buffet.

Next time I spy dry hay in the feed trough when it's time to put cows in, I plan to roll over on the ground, belly-up, and play dead until the hay crazies pass.

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York Co. 4-H Council

The York County 4-H Council met on May 1, at the 4-H Center.

Money made from painting Easter Eggs will go toward the new popcorn popper at the 4-H Center.

Lebanon County 4-H Clubs are sponsoring a dance on May 25 at the Lebanon County Fairgrounds.

Call Johanna Geiger at the 4-H Office if you want to attend.

The next meeting will be held on June 5. The new Dairy Princess will give a presentation, and members will devour a Super Sundae. Every person should bring a topping.

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