

# On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



Our Wanda and Wendy are perfect examples.

From the first day homebred Wanda joined the dairy herd, her obnoxious, scatter-brained behaviour won her special - deserved - notoriety.

She even looks the part of a malcontent. As a calf, dehorning didn't totally "take" on Wanda, resulting in a short, but slightly crooked, whitish-colored horn growing from the left side of her head.

Wanda also boasts a wild-eyed look, one of the few in our herd of extremely calm, laid-back bovines. Couple the wild-eyes with the lopsided horn and she has what can only be called "devilish" aura about her - which she plays to the hilt.

Endlessly I've grumbled while herding her around the barn that she couldn't see her stall if it fell on her. She has one speed, fast, which slides into overdrive as she sails past her stall and on down to the far end of the dairy barn.

Needless to say, in addition to all the above irritating qualities, Wanda isn't above sending the milking equipment flying occasionally - or taking aim at the person attaching it.

Weird Wanda (as she's commonly known) has two redeeming qualities which have earned her

the tenuous right to hang around the herd. She's a consistent, health-problem-free producer and breeds back to calve on a regular basis. Too hateful to do anything that would get her tossed out, I figure.

It was inevitable that Weird Wanda would have heifer calves, about three of 'em so far, I think. The first joined the milking string last year.

Wacky Wendy, the first milking daughter of Weird Wanda, is "just like her mother" in scatter-brained temperament. Naturally, this family will prove to be heavily one-sided in giving birth to heifer calves, more to be "just like their mother."

And, then there's Matilda. Matilda is an old excellent cow suffering breeding difficulties - until she spent a romantic interlude with the bull in residence. The end result was a rugged baby heifer calf, who promises, to grow up to be just like her mother. Unfortunately.

Matilda will cheerfully flatten anyone who happens to get in the way of her eternal and endless quest to eat. Such aggressiveness and determination are qualities which have obviously kept the old

girl going. On the other hand, anyone putting cows into their stalls had better step lively and not have their back turned when Matilda marches down the alleyway to conquer the feed trough. She simply will not stop, nor step aside, for a human traffic director. Or at least not this human traffic director.

"Just like her mother" is Matilda II. As a 3-month-old calf, she lowered her hard head, and repeatedly plowed into my legs as I bedded the pen. Finally, it was necessary to physically hang onto her head and wrestle her away while I backed my way out and over the gate.

While we have no absolute proof, it is believed that Matilda II never sleeps. She has never been observed anywhere but with her head jammed through the hay rack, jaws going constantly, and obviously has but one goal in life - to grow up to be "just like her mother."

Sometimes, in fleeting moments of dairy farm frustration, I have a burning yen to be "just like my mother."

My mother doesn't chase Matildas or Weird Wandas or Wacky Wendys. Not ever.

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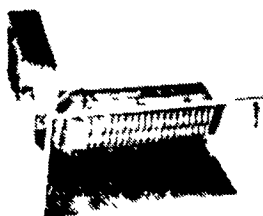
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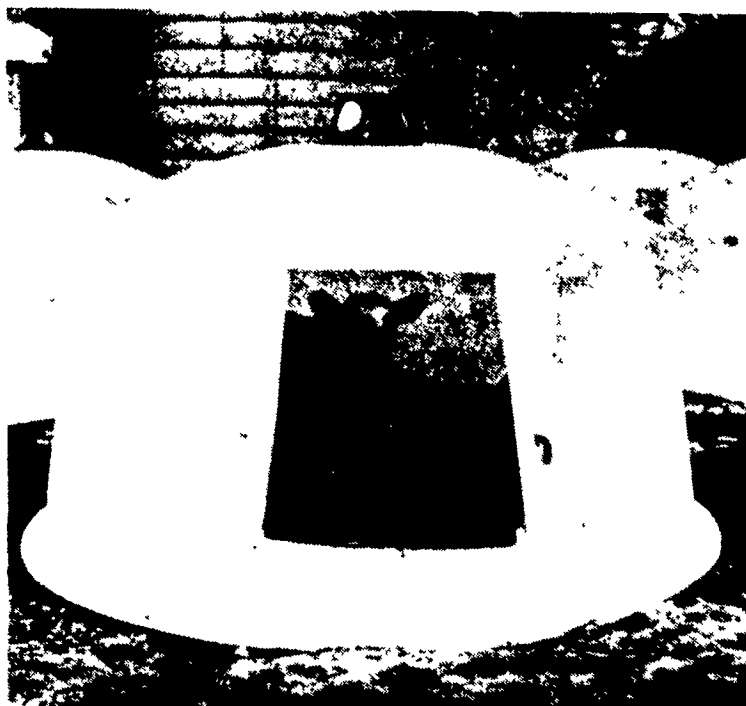
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