

# On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



Days, weeks, months go by during which we pay little note hereabouts to the marvelous innovative improvements which add to the quality of life in general about the farmstead.

It was the orange plastic baling twine which stirred this philosophical reflection. Not that plastic twine is new. It's just new here.

The traditional sisal or hemp -- or whatever it's made from -- has always been the baling twine of preference of The Farmer. However, initial orders of twine don't completely wrap up this hay baling season, and we went looking for emergency supplies. What came home was the orange plastic.

While the orange plastic stuff lacks the aesthetic, all-natural appeal of the more familiar tan, fiber twine, it boasts qualities otherwise lacking in non-synthetics. A thread of bright orange has far greater visibility than one of beige, when buried in a pile of similarly-hued straw, for instance. This takes on some significance when you forgot to throw down heifer bedding, twilight is descending, and nary a string can be seen in the semi-dark confines of a barn.

Then, too, plastic is no doubt more durable than fiber when exposed to the weather. For actual bale storage use here, weather dur-

ability is no big deal, since bales go into covered mows.

Instead, it's for all those extra-curricular uses for baling twine in which plastic's durability wins points. Like tying pasture gates together or shut - or open, or weaving "temporary" repairs in fencing breaks. Pounding rain, blankets of snow, harsh, drying winds and baking sunshine do less damage perhaps to plastic than to fiber. We shall all rejoice over more firmly twine-anchored gates and fences. Except maybe for Holly the Heifer, whose 1 a.m. neighborhood explorations may be more effectively halted.

As substitute neckchains for those cows which slip and break their links on a continuing basis, plastic promises less frequent fashioning of stall tiedowns from twine lengths.

On the negative side, cut ends of plastic twine unravel and fray much more readily than fiber. A flock of kittens playing with a couple of plastic strings can reduce them to shreds with far greater efficiency. By spring, we'll no doubt have a whole new wave of enviro-

mental decoration, birds' nests woven and artistically decorated with shredded bits of orange twine.

Along the same line of ag technological improvement is the woven plastic feed bag, adding a space age synthetic twist to the classic method of feed delivery. Of course, while a great majority of feed is now handled via bulk bin method, smaller batches still keep feed firms brown or beige, bagging it.

These, too, have proven a boon for impromptu farm improvements. With one side and the bottom of a plastic feed bag slit open, you have a usable piece of durable material about a yard square. This size just fits some of the windows in our young stock pens. Stretched over a simple wood frame, plastic feedbag remnants are a perfect storm window: lightweight, easily installed and removed by even a non-mechanical farm wife. And cheap.

A plastic feedbag use list is limited only by the imagination: quickie tractor seat cover for damp mornings, water-resistant, heat-

retaining blanket for a chilled calf, and, folded together, a cozy cushion for sitting on scratchy bales. Tomatoes ripen well under them, cats like to sleep on top of them, and, tied shut with the original feed bag string, garbage holds well inside of them. And they are dog- and-cat-damage resistant.

Purists who remember uses for real cloth feedbags are no doubt shuddering. Plastic replacements are absolutely useless for stitching into housedresses, pieced quilts, rag rugs or dish-drying cloths. And they've rendered the term "burlap bag" obsolete, relegated to language history with the likes of "shoe button hook," "butter paddle" and "goose grease."

Sociologists have long lamented our becoming a "plastic society."

But, never let it be said that farmers aren't right up there on the cutting edge. Even in the plastic revolution.

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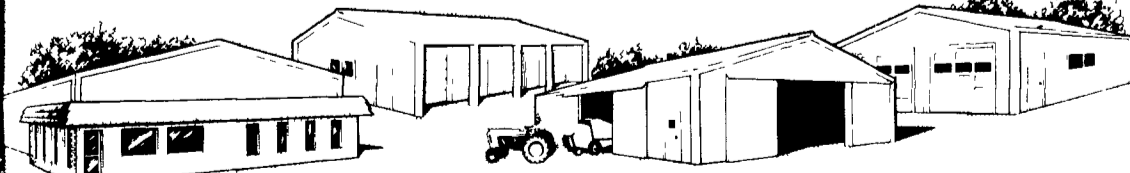
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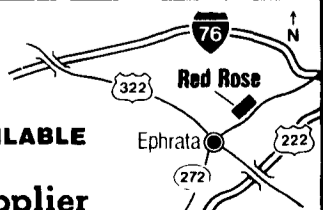
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