

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



By gosh, they were right. Remember the flak that flew several years back when OSHA put out a safety pamphlet for farmers? Written something in the style of a Jack and Judy first-grader-primer, it included such bits of wise advice as "manure is slippery."

By gosh, they were right. See, right here on my left knee? Well, no, you really can't see anything. But, trust me, I can feel the bruise is there when I kneel down to play with our 13 non-barn kittens.

The knee bruise came to be when my frustration level skyrocketed over a cow which trucked on past her stall for the umpteenth time the other afternoon, as we put the herd into the barn for evening chores. As I went ripping up the center alley to head her off, my worn-soled sneaker connected with a fresh cow "pie" and down I went onto my knee.

Later that evening, a headline from our rural electric cooperative newsletter jumped off the page and socked me right in the gray matter. "Knowing is not enough," it said, with a sub-heading noting that National Farm Safety Week begins tomorrow, September 20. Since the article focused on electricity-related farm safety, manure wasn't even mentioned.

But it set me to thinking about the accidents we've had around here during some twenty-plus years of dairy and crop production. All things considered, we've been pretty fortunate.

Only one accident of any conse-

quence was electric related. On a very wet Sunday morning several years ago, a cow connected with an electrical line at the grain bin that had somehow shorted out. Of all the bills we pay in a year's time, the occasional one for dead cow removal probably hurts the most.

Still, cattle and equipment can be replaced; people can't be.

That reality got new emphasis last December in what we now call Dad's bull-wrestling vacation. The three days the farmer spent in a Virginia hospital, after he was rammed into a gate while loading a mature — and tame — bull, pounded home the farm safety message. Only badly bruised and sore for some weeks after, he was luckier than many. The bull-related tales we've heard since just stand your hair on end.

In a large majority of farm accidents (or any accidents), carelessness — from hurrying, fatigue, and sometimes frustration — plays a lead role.

A new growth of skin on the palms of both my hands is a timely example of my own blatant carelessness. About two weeks ago, getting the milking equipment ready for evening chores, I apparently dumped into the udder wash water not our normal teat cleaning solution, but a pipeline acid sanitizer instead. My hands, normally sensitive to acids, broke out later in ugly, watery, itchy, painful blisters. Fortunately, no one else helping to milk experienced similar reactions, nor did it seem to affect any cows.

I share this embarrassing inci-

dent of personal stupidity solely as a reminder of the danger in not paying strict attention when using chemicals of any sort.

Of course, there are farm accidents that are just that: pure and simple accident, fate, happenstance, whatever you want to call it. For instance, anything from broken noses to severe trauma and internal injuries may follow the pounding of a person by livestock hooves if an animal is suddenly spooked.

And equipment injuries, from cut fingers, to loss of limbs, to death, is a tragedy far too familiar to the farming community. Chains, belts, augers, and PTO's move anything in their way. Including skin and bones.

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hopes of the harvest season just getting underway, this upcoming National Farm Safety week is a sobering and timely reminder to PLEASE BE CAREFUL!

And don't forget . . . manure is indeed slippery.



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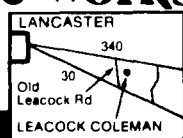


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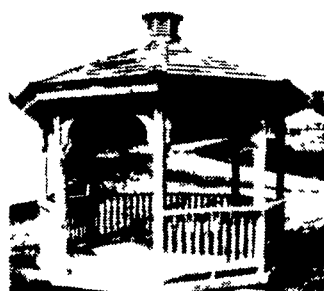
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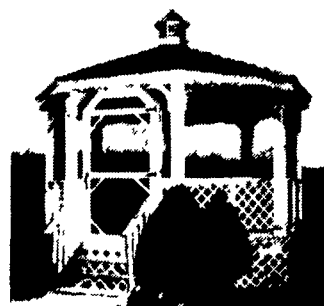
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