

On being a farm wife - And other hazards Joyce Bupp



For persons to come bursting into my kitchen, bearing the latest in personal injuries, is not at all unusual around here.

Sometimes they hobble there through the office, or ease in by the back door, or come running, dripping blood in their wake. Blessedly, most have been of the everyday bump-bruise-abrasion style of wounds, patchable with Band-Aids, first-aid ointment, peroxide, yards of gauze and an assorted collection of adhesive tapes we've accumulated over the years.

Thus, when the farmer appeared beside the kitchen sink recently, blood oozing from his face in two spots, his clothing manure-ornamented, I barely blinked.

My usual comment - "Looks like that could use a stitch" - got the usual response. Ignored. On to the next issue.

"What happened?"

Seems a near-yearling heifer that had just had her feet trimmed hadn't been too pleased with the attention. While being led through the dairy barn toward the heifer pens, the "leadership" role changed.

She took off running. He refused to let go of her halter, eventually being dragged, face-first, over the square-edged, steel grates covering the manure gutter. The square edges had nicely sliced two small gashes in his face, while neatly cleaning off that section of gutter. Luckily, during the belly-down slide, his forehead hadn't connected with one of the angled edges of the concrete stalls.

Earlier, I'd helped move that

heifer down for her toenail trim. She'd thrown a super tantrum against being moved. Anywhere.

Then I remembered something. And it made perfectly good sense. "You realize," I reminded the farmer, "that her name's 'angel'."

Over the years, we've tried to name our animals sensible-sounding names that don't look too outrageous on show signs or in advertising. A bunch of 'em have backfired. The label "Angel" for a heifer possessed with such devilish, ornery characteristics is but the latest in a string of misnaming.

"Best" immediately comes to mind. A heifer just recently fresh and milking her first lactation, Best is anything but. Of only moderate size and mediocre appearance, her back droops, her udder is nothing to brag about, and she manages to maintain one of the messiest stalls in the barn.

Of similar disappointment was the calf once optimistically labeled "Beautiful." Beautiful turned out similar to "Best." Or maybe a bit worse, as I recall. (Friends once raised sisters named Best and Beautiful and they developed into two of the Holstein breed's outstanding individuals.)

And, then there was "Peace." Who would have more appropriately been named "War?" It would have fitted her temperament far better. She'd have gotten along great with "Angel."

But, one of our greatest disappointments turned out to be "Hopeful." Her pedigree was pretty fair, from a gentle, high-

producing, well-conformed dam and popular sire. From the day she was born, Hopeful was a sweetheart, tame and loveable, and displayed some showing potential.

Then, one day when she was about four-months-old, Hopeful began holding her head at a strange sideways angle and became listless. Our vet's diagnosis was not

promising. Hopeful died a few days later at the University of Philadelphia's New Bolton Center for large animal care with a brain tumor.

Based on several years' experience with such disappointments, our calf naming is about to undergo a drastic change. We'll try the Seven Dwarfs approach.

Names like Snoopy and Grum-

py. Dopey, Dumpy and Sneezey. Yucky. Ugly, Looser, Goofy, and Forget It.

Worst that can happen is that they'll manage to live up to their names.



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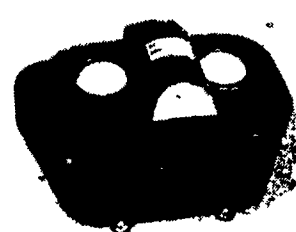
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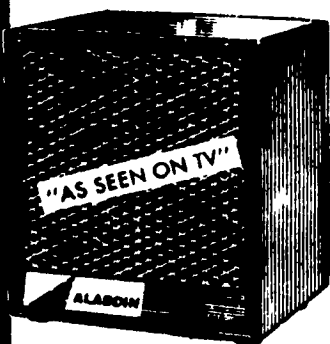


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