

# On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



People often quote the time-proven philosophy that "the more things change, the more they stay the same."

Upon these dependable changes, our lives find measures of stability.

Wars, of some sort, will forever be waged. New lives enter the world and old ones move on. The sun rises in the East and sets behind the opposite horizon. Some years will be wet and others dry.

Stock markets will rise and fall. New frontiers will forever beckon, be they ocean, prairie or outer space. Medicine will conquer old

ailments and new ones will be discovered — or at least labeled.

And cows, will be cows.

Over the millenia, the domestic bovine has changed her outward physical appearance.

Her legs are longer and neck more sleek. Her udder is wider and more securely attached. Her body has become more deeply ribbed and shows more depth. And, her capacity for producing one of nature's most wholesome foods continues to increase.

It's in her head that everything has stayed the same.

Today's improved-genetics,

computer-coded, transponder-tracked, twentieth-century cow still has the brain of her ancestors. And, it continues to send the same message that, wherever she is, the living somewhere else is better.

Consider the following evidence.

A movement past a living room window just barely caught the corner of my vision. In the split second that followed, the thought whizzed through my subconscious that a horse was outside, but that the only resident horse ever on the place was sold last fall, because of owner conflict with a busy college schedule.

By the time this thought process had evolved, the "horse" was clearly visible through the window of the front door.

"There's a cow standing out front!" I groaned to the other two family members still finishing Sunday dinner dessert.

"There are cows all over the place," corrected the farmer, racing down the basement steps after a glance outside.

All over the place, indeed. Dessert was abandoned as the

three of us shoved our feet into boots and took off in hot pursuit in different directions. After years of practice, we have these anti-stampedede maneuvers down pat.

Now, the first members of our dairy herd are near ancient history, replaced with great-great-granddaughter offspring and occasional purchased outcross bloodlines. Though dozens of individual cows have come and gone, the herd behaves exactly as it did two decades ago.

They charge through the muddiest part of the back yard — after the morning ice has thawed off. Slip. Slide. Leave long, deep skid tracks in the grass. And at the same spots.

They still hide in the alleyway of the old barn. Rip up hay bales. Mess up straw bales. Woof down half a bag of calf starter. Knock over forks, shovels and feed scoops. Stomp on 'em going in. Stomp on 'em going back out, just in case any were missed first time through.

Take cover behind the trailer, then mosey on out and down the

road after the less clever of the "girls" have been chased, corralled and chewed out.

True, their names, their physical appearance and their gigantic potential has changed. But, escaped cows still leave the same giant pockmarks in muddy, wet grass as did their ancestors when they hot-footed it out of the swamps ahead of meat-eating dinosaurs.

Turned out that an ancient fiber-baler-twine hinge on a gate had let go under the shoving and rubbing of this bunch of boisterous bovines. And, where the living looked better was on the freedom side of the sawdust storage area, accessible after the assault on a rotten-twine fastened gate.

We may be stuck with the same mentality of cows. And I doubt we'll ever get away from the tendency to fasten "temporary" gates with twine.

But I hope they tied the gate fast with that new, improved, plastic stuff this time.

Sometimes, a little change is better than none.



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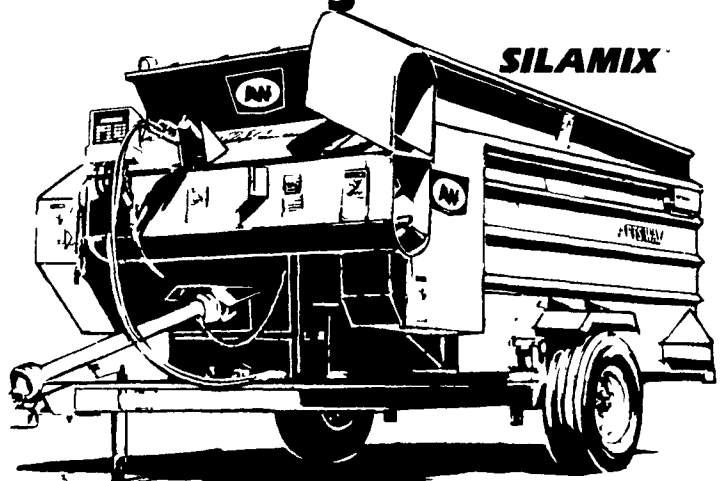
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