

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



From a distance, riding faint breezes through the screened windows of the house, the sound begins as a hum. Slowly, steadily, drawing nearer, the volume of sound swells.

Throbbing diesel horses strain in roaring tandem from the front end of the International 1206. Behind, the dusty machine lugs the clattering windrower, yellow, paddlewheel blades mechanically grazing wide strips of waist-high oats. As the machine continuously swallows bites of oats-silage-in-the-making, thundering rollers bruise and crush the long stems. Neat, green swaths mark its passing, offset by the pale yellow of fresh stubble sheltering the alfalfa seedlings emerging.

As the humming, roaring, clattering equipment nears the end of the field, marked by the sod waterway and lawn fence, its collective volume diminishes. Through the thick maple overhang can be seen the muscled, sun-browned arms of the operator, spinning the steering

mechanism and adjusting hydraulics.

With skill honed through acres of practice, the windrower is neatly maneuvered around a first, then a second, quick turn. Back under opened throttle, the machinery sounds quickly hit a crescendo, then diminish as the equipment swaths off in the other direction.

As the windrower operation heads for the distant end of the oats stand, another tractor chugs past the house. Behind the John Deere lumbers a chuckwagon. Their passage over the low spot at the bottom of the field road is marked by a clatter, then a bumping as they head up the hill.

And, from the top of the contoured hill above the farmstead comes yet another roar of slowly increasing strength. Behind the humming chopper rumbles another forage wagon.

This combined symphony of

sounds stills briefly to a mechanized whisper, as engines idle. Momentarily, the chopper pulls away from the wagon rounded full of shredded forage, hooks up to the empty replacement, then whines off to gobble and shred another load of the dried windrow.

With the subdued rumble of a tractor in low gear, holding back a heavy load, the shuttle creeps down the steep grade and rattles as it pulls from field road onto solid macadam. Geared and throated up, is stirs another wave of dust through the house as it passes—a mere twenty feet from the screen door.

And, in a half-minute, the muted motor of a shuttling tractor rises to a scream, harmonizing in trio with the tumbling din of the heavy silage blower-fan and the rhythmic clanking of the forage wagon's unloading chain-gear mechanism.

Picture it: a peaceful, green and gold landscape, sweet with the fragrance of wild rose and honeysuckle, still and quiet save bird-songs and an occasional moan of sky-high jet turbines. Such is the popular calendar-picture image of the rural farm scene.

Through much of open-window season of the year, however, today's high-speed, high-tech farm equipment keeps farmsteads operating on a high-decibel noise level.

And, when equipment halts, the humming of milking system vacuum pumps and cooling compressors, clattering bulk feeding chains

and silage unloaders, feed cart clanking, speeding fan motors, and high-pitched, hungry bawling calves alter the lyrics but keep high the decibel level of the choral sounds.

The racket offers a mixed blessing. With a brief overview of chores for the day, a farm wife can gauge progress or problems just by listening. Overlong periods of still and silence stir uneasiness. What broke? Did a visitor stop by, a heifer wiggle out, a cow calve? Worst (we quickly fear the worst) - is

someone injured?

A steady symphony of tractor and equipment parading past the house lends a satisfied feeling of accomplishment. Down-side of the equipment din is the knowledge that hearing loss continues to be a career side-effect for many farmers. Though I hint about ear-plugs and similar hearing protective devices, my nagging often goes unheeded.

And, when silence finally does reign, it just makes the birds' songs that much sweeter sounding.

REMOVING GRASS STAINS

Philadelphia College of Textiles & Science to Penn State Cooperative Extension

First, a few general precautions that are best to follow in the removal of any stain. - Test a small hidden area of your garment, with the materials recommended for a particular treatment. This is to make sure color loss or fabric damage will not occur and is especially true if bleach is recommended. - Never scrub or rub delicate fabrics. Mechanical action such as this can cause a "bruise" mark that cannot be removed. - For any type of stain the quicker you remove it, the better your chances for success.

Whether your child is playing an

active sport like baseball or wrestling the dog, your laundry is bound to see an increase in grass stains. To remove, sponge the stain with alcohol. (Always test to make sure the alcohol won't hurt the fabric.) If this doesn't work, rinse with vinegar. If this very mild bleaching agent doesn't work, and the fabric is bleachable, try using bleach. Then wash the garment.

If the fabric is nonwashable, sponge the stained area with white vinegar, and then with plain water to rinse.

WARNING: Alcohol is a very powerful solvent. It is extremely flammable and can make almost any dye run. Use pure alcohol because rubbing alcohol may contain other additives that can cause trouble.

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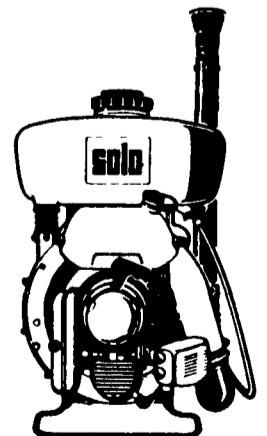
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