

**On being
a farm wife
- And other
hazards**

Joyce Bupp



How many pecks are there in a bushel?

That query came up at the breakfast table one morning last week. Seems one of his favorite neighborhood farmers had mentioned to the teen-ager how many pecks of wheat seed he had planted this fall.

How many pecks in a bushel? Two, I quickly guessed. No, four. Eight? Both the farmer and I allowed it had been a long time since we'd studied those measurements in school, and practically

never have occasion to need to know. And the teen-ager was certain he had never had to learn that particular dry measure unit.

A brand spanking new seed corn "crop notes" pocket-notebook just happened to be buried nearby in the current stack of mail. Those little gems are always chocked full of such handy information.

Sure enough, between the pages of maturity, disease and pest ratings, planting rate recommendations, silage tonnage estimate

charts and yield calculations, was a page titled Farm Math. It featured metric conversions, diameter/circumference equations, how to's on measuring area and volume for circles, rectangles, triangles, cubes, cones - even pyramid shapes - for storages or piles of harvested grains.

Not a mention of a peck. On a hunch, I dug into an accumulation of advertising notepads. Out came a piece of farm history, a 1969 seed corn pocket notebook, complete with jotted notes on bales of hay and straw harvested that season. But not a single dry measure chart was among the yield charts, steps to better silage, list of plant food removals by various crops and corn yields by state in 1967.

Here was living proof of how times change, including our methods of measuring the important things in our business and lifestyles.

Recently, I condensed the accounting data on a computer disk, for more efficient numbers crunching of the year-to-date's worth of stored information. At the start, only some 27,000 bytes of space remained on my disk, or

less than a tenth of the storage capacity.

Remember when a "byte" was something you took out of an apple, and had nothing to do with recordkeeping? And RAM was a male sheep or something one vehicle might accidentally do to another, not a measurement of computer memory.

Ignoring the obvious dictionary and encyclopedia, I went in search for the elusive peck measurement in my small collection of farm almanacs. One chart in a recent one did have dry measure weight - in metric equivalents. But no pecks per bushel.

The Old Farmer's Almanac of 1983 included a fascinating run-down on the origin of old measures. A foot, for instance, was the length of Charlemagne's foot, the equivalent in the year 1305 of 36 barleycorns laid end to end. (How long is a barleycorn? Why 1/36th of a foot, of course.)

An inch was the width across

the knuckle of King Edgar's thumb- or three barleycorns. The reach from King Henry I's nose to his fingertips was a yard, which was twice the length of a cubit, the distance from elbow to fingertip.

Originally, the mile was 1,000 double steps of a Roman legionary. A furlong was the length of furrow a team of oxen could plow before resting and an acre was the amount of land a yoke of oxen could plow in a day's time.

Furlong sent me searching again. A furlong is an eighth of a mile, or 220 yards. (Or 23,760 barleycorns.)

Eventually, in a 1989 seed guide mini-notebook, was found a list that included bushels, pecks, furlongs (40 rods), rods (16-1/2 feet), leagues (3 miles), one stone (14 pounds), long ton (2240 pounds - or 160 stones).

There are four pecks in a bushel. Got that, kid?

Hey, Mom, what's a barley-corn?



**Is This
Turkey Talk
Or What?**

Author Unknown

With Thanksgiving less than a week away and Christmas just around the corner, I thought it would be worthwhile to share some very informative information.

Planning a large Thanksgiving dinner, I had to do a little research on the cooking time of the turkey. I discovered that the more a turkey weighs the less you cook it. For instance, you cook a six-pound turkey for 20 to 25 minutes per pound, a 12-pound turkey for 15 to 20 minutes per pound and an 18-pound turkey for 13 to 15 minutes per pound.

Plotting the time on a graph, it works out that you don't have to cook a 35-pound at all and a 200-pound turkey will heat the house to 350 degrees for eight days. All you have to do is feed that hummer 30 to 40 pounds of chicken feed every day, fix him a little nest in the guest room and your energy worries are over.

There are some drawbacks that should be considered. One, turkeys are very difficult to house break. Large turkeys are particularly stubborn and react to discipline by burying their masters in the sandbox.

Second, turkeys are very dumb. They often chase parked cars and fall in love with them. Extremely large turkeys present a real hazard to foreign cars during certain seasons.

Finally, turkeys are very rank conscious. They demand respect from lower-ranking turkeys, hate second lieutenants and eat kernels.

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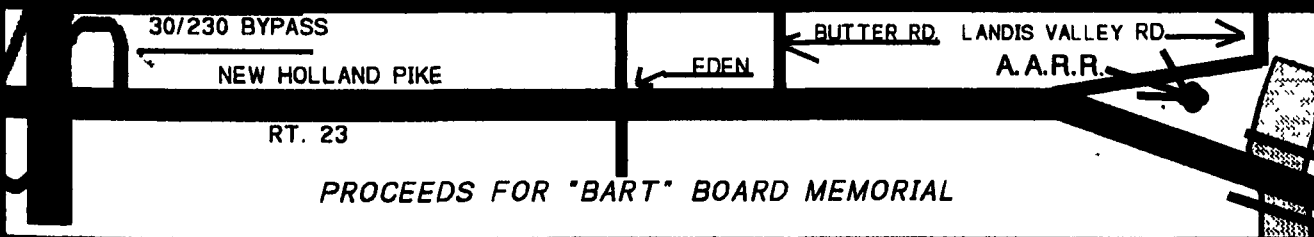
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