

# On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



Despite squinting eyelids, the anticipated phenomenon couldn't be seen.

Then again, maybe it was just a "sense, an expectation, that kept my eyes scanning skyward for the usual sign. After all, the moon was out, but beginning to be faintly clouded over. Dampness hung in the air. Everything was right for it. And the weather forecasts were dropping ominous hints.

Minutes later, the sky having darkened to a full blackness of night, there it was, standing out in the theatre of the heavens like a glaring spotlight.

"Did you see the ring around the moon?" I asked The Farmer as he returned from moving heifer

groups. "It's giant; absolutely humongous."

Mentally, a list checkoff started. Shovel. Salt. Blanket. Coveralls, gloves, boots. The first time I ever recall seeing such a huge, impressive ring around the moon was followed hours later by one of the heaviest snowfalls of recent years.

In less than 36 hours, it would be necessary to depart for an overnight trip. With such a spectacular bad-weather warning like the one circled overhead, there was no way this driver would back one tire out of the garage without a truckful of emergency road provisions.

Never mind that the last several

times I've seen such a moon ring the expected bad weather never materialized. Okay, so even Mother Nature mixes her signals on occasion. But isn't it interesting how we condition ourselves to respond to certain stimuli, even after just one memorable experience.

A red light burns round-the-clock just inside the glass-windowed storm doors on the milk house entrance. Hooked to the milk tank cooling compressor, the steady red glow is an "all's well" signal that the milk is cold. Should it start warming, the light begins to flash.

Seeing the milkhouse pitch black at night sends us literally running to the barn to determine what failed. Fortunately, it has usually been just a bad bulb. Fear of lost livelihood - spoiled milk in our case - is a powerful response stimulus.

Solomon's steady barking similarly sends us hustling to the door to investigate who or what is stirring around the farmstead. Few visitors miss his noisy attention. And, he's alerted us several times to meandering heifers or a loose cow out snatching feed. He barks, we check. Classic conditioning.

Honking horns, a ringing telephone, a bawling cow, a crying child - all catch our attention and

push our response buttons. And those little, everyday responses offer lots of insight into us as individuals.

The sight of dry soil in a single houseplant sends me trucking to every windowsill, water container in hand. I suffer from a severe psychological defect - the inability to water just one plant. This response stems, no doubt, from lingering guilt over having neglected a few in my time.

Having gotten caught short a couple of times over the years on kindling to start the wood stove, I'm a conditioned branch-and-twig-picker-upper. This response is actually a multi-beneficial one, offering a cleaner lawn, less wear and tear on the mower blades, happiness to the dog who thinks my sole purpose in life is to throw sticks for him to "fetch," plus the physical benefits of frequent bending exercise.

Conditioning also sends us bending for bottles and cans tossed along our roadsides. This response is fueled by the adrenalin of anger at slobes conditioned to believe the whole world is their trash can.

Food is a powerful response conditioner. I have, before pot-pourri became so popular, sim-

mered cloves to replace less pleasant cooking odors. "What are you baking?" was the invariable question of smiling anticipation, followed by the grumbling of disappointment at no freshly-baked cookies.

And, after finding missing some special treats I'd recently purchased, I accosted the obvious culprit with a vocal chewing out.

"Mom," was the grinning, conditioned response. "I figure anything I find in the house that's edible is fair game for eating."

This Mom is now conditioning herself to hide things better.

## Cambria Society

Lois Hughes was the guest of honor at a meeting of the Cambria County Society of Farm Women. It was a surprise party held February 7 at the Cambria County Cooperative Extension office, Ebensburg.

Lois was honored because of her election to a three year term as 2nd vice-president of the Society of Farm Women of Pennsylvania at the annual State Convention in Harrisburg, January 7 & 8. She will serve three years as vice-president before assuming state presidency.

Lois is a member of the Cambria Township society which was organized in Wilmore, on April 23, 1921. Her husband's grandmother, Matilda Hughes, was a charter member. Her mother-in-law, Emma Hughes, is now a honorary member and Lois has been a member since 1956.

She has served in many of the local and county offices and was state treasurer for three years. In 1971, she won the honor of Farm Woman of the Year at the state level.

Lois is married to I. Roland Hughes and has six married sons and daughters and nine grandchildren. They live on a farm in Portage.

Lois is an active member of the United Church of Christ and has served as a 4-H leader for many years.

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