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Grieving Young Farm Couple Hopes Their Experience Enlightens Other Families, Changes Milk House Detergent Labels



Luke and Susan Howard with a portfolio of their son Matthew. Matthew died last month from accidentally ingesting dairy pipeline cleaner.

Editor's Note: At 5 p.m. March 22, 1991, playing hide and seek around the bulk milk tank in the company of his parents, little Matthew Howard, 17-month-old son of Luke and Susan Howard, Mt. Pleasant Mills, instinctively picked up a cup used to catch the drippings from the transfer tube on the milk house detergent container and drank less than an ounce of the liquid soap. In less time than it takes to blink an eye, a chain of events was put into motion that six weeks later left the little toddler dying in the arms of his weeping parents.

Matthew Howard died April 27, 1991, and is buried in a church graveyard that can be seen from the family farm.

This story of human love, almost unexpressable grief, and neighborly, church and clinical compassion, also projects a vivid warning: sodium hydroxide found in many milk house detergents is lye, not salt, as many farmers have perceived it to be. The chemical is often found in a form more concentrated than what is used to unclog drains. The danger warning on the label should be strictly heeded.

Read, weep, and take the warning.

EVERETT NEWSWANGER

Managing Editor

MOUNT PLEASANT MILLS (Snyder County)—“He was the perfect little boy, that’s for sure,” said Luke Howard affectionately. “That’s the Howard chin,” he said pointing to a snapshot of little Matthew Howard, age 17 months. “And of course he had my ears too. My dad confirmed that the first time he saw him after he was born.”

What happened in the milk house that Friday evening when this young farm family was preparing to milk their 48 Holstein cows, has happened before. And because farming is a most hazardous occupation, accidents on the farm will happen again. But Luke and Susan Howard tell their story in hopes that out of their grief, some other farm family may be enlightened, and some additional warnings will be placed on the labels of milk house detergents.

As soon as Matthew ingested the soap, Luke and Susan read the label and saw that the antidote

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Attending Physician Thinks Farm Toddlers Need Protection Too

EVERETT NEWSWANGER

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DANVILLE (Montour Co.)—One of the attending physicians at the Geisinger Medical Center who helped treat Matthew Howard said the ingestion of caustic alkali found in common milk house pipeline detergent is quite common in farm children and that as a pediatric intensive care specialist, these accidents are disheartening and disturbing to treat medically.

Dr. George Tenedios, MD, anesthesia, said these children can be devastated by the effects of ingesting caustic agents. “The accidental ingestion can lead to death as well as increased morbidity

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Pittsburgh Pirates, PDPP Score With Dairy Promotion Program

PITTSBURGH (Allegheny Co.)—A milk promotion deal between the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program (PDPP) and the Pittsburgh Pirates has gotten underway and is bringing public attention to both the dairy industry and the baseball organization’s shortstop.

The PDPP is a non-profit generic dairy product promotion program that is supported with funds from the Pennsylvania dairy farmers.

On May 12 at Three Rivers Stadium in Pittsburgh, the program

got off to its start for the year with Jay Bell Growth Chart Day and Dairy Day at the Ballpark.

The growth chart program features a large poster of Jay Bell with a measurement gradient printed so youth can follow their own growth on the Bell poster.

That, combined with Boyd Wolff, state secretary of agriculture, throwing out the first ball to start the game provided a way to give the dairy message to the 12,000 youngsters who received growth charts and the more than 21,000 fans who attended the game.

The Pittsburgh Pirates/PDPP dairy promotion campaign gets another chance to take its message of wholesomeness and growth to the youth and adults attending a baseball game when — for the sixth year in a row — they kick off June Dairy Month on June 4, again at Three Rivers Stadium.

The state’s dairy industry will arrive in Pittsburgh and start festivities at 11 a.m. with a celebrity

milking contest, followed by product sampling, dairy entertainment and industry presentations.

In the milking contest, participants are to be Bell and a dairy industry spokesperson, who are to compete against Stan Belinda, the Pirate’s relief pitcher.

The cow is to be provided by the Marburger Farm Dairy of Evans City, in Butler County.

Along with the milking contest, the several of the state’s dairy princesses are to perform skits carrying a message of the benefits of having dairy products as part of a diet.

In addition, there is to be entertainment for the youth from a ventriloquist dummy, Ms. Udderly. Also scheduled is a country-western band, “Woodsmoke.”

The annual event is sponsored by the Dairy Industry Association of western Pennsylvania, the Mid-East United Dairy Industry Association and Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program to recognize Pennsylvania’s outstanding dairy industry.



Pittsburgh Pirate Shortstop Jay Bell and Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture Boyd Wolff kick off dairy promotion activities at Three Rivers Stadium.

Tobacco Plants Have A New Job — Harboring Viruses

VACAVILLE, Calif. — And you thought tobacco was made only for chewing and smoking.

Just when some farmers are giving up on growing tobacco from a depressed national market, scientists are making new use of the plant — for harboring viruses.

That’s right — viruses. According to a story which recently appeared in “The Wall Street Journal,” a company called Biosource

Genetics Corp. is spraying tobacco plants with a virus so the plant can manufacture a drug known as “Compound Q” (technical name, trichosanthin). The drug is used on AIDS patients. Other drugs made by the plant include alpha amylase (a food enzyme to convert starch to sugars). Still other plants are creating human proteins, according to the newspaper.

Biosource calls the technology

“Geneware” — a possible new source for chemicals used by the medicine and other industries.

Basically, a “mosaic virus,” (the same one that threatens tobacco fields), containing the gene material, is sprayed onto the plant. The material goes into the plant cell, and a few processes later, the proteins are genetically created inside the cell. The gene matter reproduces itself and migrates to

other cells, where the process begins again.

Right now, the company has moved their operations to the actual field to begin the process of obtaining the new chemicals from the plants.

This may provide another way for tobacco farmers to possibly make better domestic use of their crops, according to experts.

“The system will allow tobacco farmers to have wider market

opportunities since they will be able to contract their crops to companies that use the Geneware system to make commercial products in tobacco plants,” said Robert L. Irwin, Biosource president, in the “Wall Street Journal.”

If the test is successful, according to the Journal, Biosource plans to continue using other material in similar tests and possibly build a processing plant in North Carolina to handle the work.