

# On being a farm wife - And other hazards Joyce Bupp



'Tis a good weekend not to be traveling on any of the state's key highways into the mountains.

Unless you're headed south.

Or unless you're headed for "deer country." And then you'll be joining two bazillion cars, pickups, four-wheel-drives, vans, motorcycles and other assorted vehicles headed for deer camp and buck fever.

When our daughter worked at a local convenience store a few years ago, she was fascinated with the standard shopping list of the obvious deerhunters doing their last minute shopping. Major items: propane fuel, potato chips, candy bars. Not necessarily in that order.

Some of us don't have to set foot off the property to stalk game. Some of us hunt minus the heavy coveralls, blaze orange hats, hot-seat cushions, electric socks or smelly buck lure scent.

In fact, last year's opening day of deer season saw me tracking down one of the biggest trophies of my life.

I nailed it.

But it got away.

It was a gray, damp, chilly morning, the kind that makes you wish you had sprung for a pair of battery-powered electric socks - and matching gloves. Morning barn chores were nearly finished as I returned to the heifer pens under the old bank barn. The supply of hay and straw bales the dog and I had dropped through the hay hole lay piled in the walkway and needed to be stacked out of the way.

Loafing around the heifer's feed trough was one of the resident barn cats. The cats had already had their morning milk feeding and this one was busy

doing what cats typically do after breakfast — licking the milk spatters from its face and grooming its already shiny coat.

Most of the bales had been stacked along the side when I suddenly spied the wild game. A big, fat, sleek barn rat.

The rat dashed out from under a bale and streaked toward the end of the alleyway, where the bedding pack of the heifer pen begins. If it made it past the gate and across the open bedded area, the vermin would disappear into some crack in the barn foundation to continue its ratty lifestyle.

But before the rat covered more than about two feet, the cat struck like lightning. That a cat could so clamly be sitting, casually grooming itself, and in a split second be wrestling with this humongous rat several feet away just boggled my mind.

This was one speedy hunting cat.

And one determined rat.

It swung around and nipped a painful bite in the cat's face. And the cat, in stunned surprise at the rat's attack, let go of its catch.

In the brief moment it took the rat to realize it was free, I did what any hunter would do to back up his hunting companion.

I shot... my rubber-booted foot out and stomped the rat.

The force effectively halted the rat's escape and offered the bitten cat a chance of revenge.

With renewed strength born of anger, the cat snatched the rodent, made a flying leap and landed in the feed trough. Reestablishing its grip on the rat's neck, the cat proudly stuck its head in the air, limp game dangling between its whiskers and pranced off to enjoy dessert.

# Agent's Life

(Continued from Page B3)

understanding, desire and popularity of agricultural studies, the ag industry, and the opportunities available through Penn State.

Opportunities now include contacts being made now by young agricultural enthusiasts which, as history has shown, tend to stay with the individual for life and are of help in personal life and business.

He also said the college should consider that the 4-H and FFA youth programs and the livestock shows and competitions are the best advertising and promotion for the college, because of the college's association with youth developmental events.

Winebark said those programs naturally stimulate interest in agriculture and in the college.

Furthermore, Winebark said that he wouldn't be where he is, and have the education he has, without the competitions of his youth.

"Without it I wouldn't have gone to college. Extension's people were continually prodding.

"To me, those are some of the elite extension agents in my mind and they have brought in tremendous support to the program."

Winebark said that having extension agents help out with

So buck season last year was still in its infancy when the cat and I put on a brief drive and bagged our game.

As you might guess, the meat was not wasted. The cat enjoyed every morsel.

But, after lengthy consideration, we decided to forego getting a head mount of the trophy.

such public agricultural events — such as the All American Dairy Show, the Keystone International Livestock Exposition, and the state Farm Show — exposes thousands of people to the fact that Penn State supports the industry and the youth.

The argument from the committee to support its position that extension people should cut their involvement with competitive livestock showing is that such involvement is not educational to the public.

"Wrong," Winebark said matter-of-factly.

He pointed to such programs as the Southeastern 4-H Hog Derby and the adult market hog derby and the hoof-and-rail contests which combine live showing of the animal with record keeping of growth rate, feeds and investments, and also a yield and quality evaluation of the carcass.

Such contests teach youth and adults the value of record-keeping, the truth about quality of animal and what the market values and how to raise animals for the market and how to determine what kind of livestock-raising system would best match up with desired results, etc.

Winebark also said that as an extension agent he also gets involved with youth helping with commodity promotion programs at grocery stores.

"The educational value is enormous," he said. "There is information about the real-world applications of the end product of (the youth's livestock raising) work. It affects the state of understanding of agriculture by the general public, and it provides a means for the youth to get the type of factual information they should have in order to discuss a product or an

aspect of commercial agriculture intelligently.

"It's a tremendous opportunity that, without the large animal project, disappears."

He cited various programs, such as the Master Gardner program, expanded food and nutrition program, and other programs not really in the forefront, such as an urban gardening project in Philadelphia, etc., that provide quiet, but effective local inroads in public education.

"The playgrounds had youth programs," Winebark said, "now they don't exist or they get very stingy budgets.

"It's true I spend a lot time at contests and programs. I just feel it's a tremendous opportunity working with our youth.

"For me, it's a way I can promote agriculture and get kids excited about agriculture's career opportunities. These large animal events are a way for me to give something back to a system that's been extremely beneficial to me."

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