

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



After playing games with us there for several weeks, Winter finally got serious.

In a teasing, hide-n-seek mood, Winter would kinda' pop its chilly head around a corner, yell "Gotcha!" with a brief blast of snow or freezing drizzle, and then disappear in a cloud of damp fog.

Mother Nature must have grabbed her errant Winter by the collar and told it to shape up. One step out the door confirms that Winter has indeed behaved more normally recently and put warm weather on ice. In fact, lots of stuff has been put on ice. Or under it. Or enveloped in it.

After being open much of the last several weeks, layers of ice and snow have combined to still the waters of the meadow ponds.

Much of the surface of the larger pond is coated with an opaque layer of ice, erratically marked with dark, jagged streaks. Only around the upper edge, near the underground spring which feeds the pond's flow, is there open water for the visiting mallards.

Several years have passed since optimal conditions existed for skating on the pond. It takes about ten days of consistent sub-freezing temperatures to freeze to the four inches or so we insist on for skating. And the best ice is of just frozen water; snow mixed in, like this year, roughens the surface.

Crystal fringes decorate the edges of the dairy barn, adding a sort of gingerbread architectural effect to its utilitarian design. When heat from the sun and the herd combine to loosen the ice/snow accumulation from the barn's sloping roof, the roar inside hints at the horrendous thundering that must go up from a major mountain avalanche.

It's as close as I ever care to get to one of those, thank you.

We get the same effect at the house sometimes, but ending with a tinkling sound if the edge of the cascade tumbles onto the very end of the greenhouse below. A wide board or even cardboard laid over that last row of glass during a thaw is cheap insurance.

Ice sculptures ornament the landscape around the calf nursery and outside "condo" pens. These aren't the ornate type formed by an ice artist with chisel and hammer, but rather dumpy-looking lumps shaped like drinking water buckets.

Often I'll line the bucket shapes up in the flower border, where they slowly melt and release their moisture around the roots of the roses and the perennials. It grows great weeds. But at least the melt doesn't ooze down the sloped driveway to refreeze into an ice slick by dark.

For the fields, a layer of icy snow is a blessed protective blanket.

The white coating maintains a more even temperature on the soil beneath, preventing the freezing and thawing that heaves plant root systems out of the ground. And with soil not frozen deeply beneath the snow covering, the snow should seep in as it melts, watering plant roots and replenishing groundwaters.

Fall-planted small grains, like wheat and barley, always look so much greener after being sheltered under a blanket of snow. Poor man's fertilizer, I've heard snow called.

While ice is pretty on ponds and snow cover beneficial to fields, there are places we could do without it. Like the garage.

Extension Banquet Credits Volunteers

LINDA WILLIAMS
Bedford Co. Correspondent

BEDFORD (Bedford Co.) — Displays by the Chaneyville 4-H Community Club and the Shawnee Lakers 4-H Club added color and warmth to a cold February night for the annual Bedford County extension banquet.

Two speakers from Penn State University, Don Evans, assistant dean of extension and Harold Ott, central region director of the College of Agricultural Sciences gave brief remarks.

Evans said that the "quality of life programs" are a very vital part of extension. He also credited the many volunteers involved in extension. "Extension could not survive without the many volunteers who are involved," he said.

Harold Ott emphasized the need for volunteers by noting the budget cuts that have been made throughout the state.

"We did not have an entire statewide hiring freeze," Ott said. "We have one county in the state that has no extension staff. With-

out support from the state, we cannot fill the vacancies and the programs suffer because of this."

Sue Fox, Bedford County extension agent, showed that, despite a reduced staff, Bedford County has continued to have an active program.

She pointed out some of the most successful programs during the past year have emphasized family values. "209 families attended our family night," she said.

Dave Cole, a financial advisor, had been welcomed with advice as he spoke to the farmers who pump \$38.5 million into the county eco-

nomy each year.

Kids in Control and Therapeutic Horseback Riding are two other highly successful programs.

"This summer," Fox said, "extension will be able to hire 12 college students through JPTA to help with ongoing community 4-H clubs and their projects.

Dottie Bromley, a retiree from the board, received a certificate of appreciation from Wayne Koontz, president.

Other board members elected at the February meeting included Betty Kegg, Pam Hershberger, Karen Kreigle, and Brian Woy.

New Beef Recipes

CHICAGO, ILL. — A good way to build beef sales is to increase consumer knowledge of beef cookery. Through a new checkoff-funded education program called, "Counter Intelligence: A Marketer's Guide to the Meat Department," retailers are taught basic kitchen skills that they can pass on to the people they work with on a regular basis — the consumer.

"Counter Intelligence" reflects recent beef industry research that suggests consumers enjoy cooking, but often lack kitchen know-how to add a variety of beef meals to their menu. The industry's national Cooking Skills and Knowledge Study found that consumers fix an average of 10 meals

at home each week and are most comfortable with simple stove-top or oven preparation techniques.

"Counter Intelligence" explores different cooking methods and teaches retailers that beef can be prepared in a variety of tasty dishes that will appeal to a strong cross section of consumers, which will help build beef sales. The program explores how to select proper beef cuts, emphasizing convenient dinners. It includes a 27-minute instructional video and accompanying 70-page handbook, eight retail employee pocket guides, an order blank for additional materials and two colorful beef meal posters for meat case displays.

Returning home late one bitterly cold night, I climbed out of the car and promptly found myself sitting on the garage floor. Snowslush had earlier melted from under the car, puddled on the concrete floor and frozen into a slick glaze.

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