

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



For days, I'd tried to figure out what was causing that sound.

It was just a quiet, little ticking, somewhere outside the front door. Periodically, I'd walk to the door, step out, and look around for some clue. A dry leaf stuck in a cobweb, being bumped against some other object by the breeze was what it sounded like.

While there were lots of dry leaves kicking around the porch, and a normal number of cobwebs strung in corners, the two hadn't seemed to get together anywhere near there. So the mystery continued. Until I spotted the bees some days later.

Not honey bees, not yellow jackets, but a couple of the little bees that folks around here refer to as "sweet bees" were busy working over the grapevine wreath on the door. Actually, they were working over the paper-twist wrap and bow on the wreath, chewing tiny holes in the cornhusk-like paper ribbon. A bee would land on the paper-twist, chew a hole and

leave. With a couple of bees working the paper-twist at all times, their "gathering" caused the ticking.

And, somewhere out in the yard or up in the trees is a bee hive of sorts constructed of pale lavender paper material.

The lavender ribbon was to have been replaced long ago with a more summery sky blue or sunny yellow-gold. Someday. Meanwhile, the Easter-season paper-twist just hung there and faded over the weeks. If the bees stay busy aswell, bees, the problem will solve itself.

That's just one of the slightly weird, perhaps hot-weather induced, behaviors of some of the critters lately around the farmstead. More irritating than intriguing has been the activity of our guinea hens.

While none of us can tell male and female guinea fowl apart, they can. That's obvious because a couple of guineas turned up behind the dairy barn recently

with about 20 adorable, just-hatched chicks running all about their feet. Tiny things, they look like pheasant chicks, beige-colored with lots of darker brown stripes.

Next morning, the count was down to about 16. (They move constantly, so an accurate count is next to impossible.) By evening, more like 12. And by next day, none.

How has such a no-brain species managed to avoid extinction? These mothers go traipsing off through high grass and weeds, losing chicks right and left in the foliage, making them easy pickin's for our plentiful predators.

Frustrated at such a wanton loss of hatchlings (though we don't need 20 more guineas!), I vowed to pen the next hatch — if there was one. A day or so later, we spied another dozen or so tiny chicks, trying to stay together in the tall grass and weeds with a mother screeching her lungs out calling to them.

But you have to catch and pen them by darkness — and by post-evening chore time, the hen had long since sneaked off to nest somewhere for the night. And haven't been seen since.

Now, what would cause a cow to droop her jaw wide open and pitifully pant — when you touch her neck or face — and then resume a perfectly normal stance as soon as your back is turned? Some cows do react to extreme heat in that manner, panting almost dog-like to relieve stress.

But Bossy only does it when you're working with her. Is it a sympathy ploy? An attention get-

ter? Or is it the bovine equivalent of sticking one's tongue out at someone?

And finally, one critter has adopted behavior that shows how quickly another can be trained. The local male cardinal, absent for some weeks, has taken to arriving early morning and early evening, like clockwork. He sits in the pine

or the pussywillow and chirps with unbelievable persistence.

I finally figured out what he wanted one evening and deposited sunflower seed at his favorite feeding spots. Silence promptly followed. It has since become routine; he chirps, I jump.

If only the non-human critters could so easily be trained...

Advertised Specials Increase Beef Sales

CHICAGO, IL. — About half of all beef sold in U.S. supermarkets is purchased in response to an advertised feature. When beef is featured at special prices, sales volume increases 200 to 1,000 percent compared to baseline levels.

Nationwide, a total of 6,406 retail stores participated in the program, increasing beef sales by an astounding 24 million pounds. Participating retailers profited from a net gain that totaled nearly \$29 million.

"The results of the program are truly remarkable," says Matt Wineinger, BIC director of retail programs. "In just nine weeks, this initiative moved an additional 24 million pounds of beef, an accomplishment that is not easily matched. Consumers love the taste of beef and, when they can buy it at a special price, they enjoy a double bonus.

The retailer incentive program was planned to occur at a time when forecasts showed the fed cattle market would need retailer demand and support to move more product through the system. Parti-

cipating retail chains were offered monetary incentives by the BIC to increase beef movement through additional advertising and price features on specific beef cuts. Estimated impact on the fed cattle market was a positive \$.41/cwt during the nine weeks the program was in effect. This is equivalent to \$4.68 per head on each of the 3.655 million head of fed steers and heifers sold during that time.

At present, 9,800 grocery stores in designated markets across the country have been offered the opportunity to participate in the program during another partnering period that began July 2 and will continue through August 29. It is anticipated that approximately 8,300 of these stores will move an additional 31 million pounds of beef in just eight weeks.

Beef promotion is a checkoff-funded program managed on behalf of the beef industry by the Beef Industry Council of the Meat Board, a federation of 44 state beef councils that works to build demand for beef through programs of promotion, research and consumer information.

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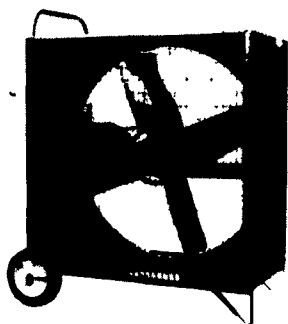
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