

On being a farm wife - And other hazards Joyce Bupp



As usual, they could be heard before they were seen.

In fact, in the bright, glaring sunlight of early morning, finding the bodies to match the voices took some squinting and shading of the eyes.

Bu, there they were. Canada geese. High, high up in the bright blue heavens, several large flocks winged overhead, their classic V-formation purposefully headed due North. Their haunting honking sang through the clear air of what had instantly become an even more beautiful day than it already was.

It truly was all I could do to not jump up and down with glee, right there outside the calf barn. With regular snowfalls still burying early shoots of greening grass, crocus buds still a dream, and not even an early, pre-season dandelion bloom in a sheltered, sunny corner, these hundreds of geese flapping high overhead trumpeted the clarion call of promise.

SPRING!

Has there ever been a year in our recent memories when spring has been more welcome? And no

one could be more ready than farmers', chomping at the bit to start hauling manure, tilling ground, tucking seeds and plants into the ground and replenishing winter-depleted supplies of live-stock feeds.

But the large flocks of geese passing overhead on an early March morning were way behind the first geese of the season. A pair had arrived on our pond early on a mid-February Sunday morning, a different pair we believe than the two which raised goslings in the meadow the last several years.

After some initial comings and goings to the meadow, they seem to have adopted our accommodations. Their north-bound relatives flapping overhead stirred them up a bit, but not so much that they took wing and followed.

"Those aren't locals; those are the real thing," I exhaled to The Farmer, who finished feeding the cows just in time to watch the last wave of geese disappearing over the north ridge.

"Hope they know what they're doing," he worried. "And that they

don't get wherever they're headed and find all the food covered with snow and ice."

Last week was full of wildlife on the move. As they have for two previous springs, a pair of colorful wood ducks splashed down on the little wood duck nest in one corner of that pond. Though the female had in both prior years repeatedly "shopped" the wooden nest box, it never completely suited her. Redwing blackbirds that instead moved in were less particular. Then we learned that a wood duck nest should be outfitted with a bed of wood chips and a slanted "stairway" of wire for the ducklings' use to climb out after hatching. We've made proper renovations in hopes of their approval this season.

Less welcome was the raccoon that wandered into the yard early one morning, then settled into a corner of the basement porch. A wild raccoon getting that up close and personal is highly suspect of being rabid. To protect our cattle and pets — and us — against that possibility, we reluctantly disposed of it.

On the other hand, I would have opened the door for another returning visitor last week, if there had been the slightest chance that offer might have been accepted. Huddled on one small, open patch of grass, bewildered and bedraggled under the sleet pelting down, was our first robin of the season.

Oh, by the way, in little more than 24 hours after we watched those waves of geese head North, we spied at least half as many headed back South.

Beware those teasing signs of Spring.

And don't pack away the Long Johns just yet.

Prevent Food Poisoning

NAZARETH (Northampton Co.) — A woman who was eight months pregnant with twins went into labor as a result of being one of several holiday party attendees stricken with food poisoning. Luckily, both babies were large enough and developed enough to be healthy. If this would have happened earlier in the pregnancy, or if the babies would have been smaller, the outcome may have been tragic.

Do you serve food to pregnant women? Do you understand food safety practices enough to prevent this from happening at your establishment or at one of your family events?

Will you be helping at your local fire company, church or social organization with food for a dance, a pancake breakfast, ham dinner, or dinner for families after a funeral? Do you handle food where you work? Do you know what temperature food in the crock pot must be kept to prevent food poisoning? What is the temperature that most bacteria grow the fastest? What is the danger zone? Do you have a dial pocket thermometer and do you use it regularly to make sure the food you are serving is out of the Danger Zone? At home, do you use meat thermometers to ensure adequate cooking temperatures? Do you know how to prevent food poisoning?

The average cost of an outbreak of food borne illness to the organization or business involved is more than \$75,000. If there is a death, the costs often bankrupt the establishment or organization.

You can also be sued if someone contracts food poisoning at your home.

Food poisoning can be prevented. Education is the key. If you supervise food service workers, you and your workers need to know how to be safe food handlers. When was the last time you, your supervisory staff, and your workers attended a food safety workshop?

Because of the demand, Northampton County Extension will be offering two types of food safety programs for food handlers in the Lehigh Valley. "Keep It Safe," a basic food safety workshop, will be held again this spring for food handlers for the low cost of \$10. There will be three 3-hour workshops held March 14 and 15, in the Lehigh Valley. All participants will receive a dial pocket thermometer, a participation certificate, and a packet of information to share with co-workers. These workshops will be similar to those held in the past two years. If you attended one in the last two years, maybe you can persuade a co-worker to attend this year. If you would like more in-depth training, come to the food sanitation certification course.

The National Restaurant Association's ServSafe Foodservice Sanitation Certification Course will be held April 11 and 18 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and April 24 from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Pre-registration is required for both programs! Contact the Northampton County Cooperative Extension office at (610)-746-1970 for registration materials.

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