

On being a farm wife - And other hazards Joyce Bupp



So much to do. So little time. In other words, stand back out of the way if you see a farmer coming. Otherwise, you might get flattened.

I've always felt a love-hate relationship for spring's "wide-open throttle, full-speed ahead" fieldwork season.

How delightful it is to watch the fields green-up overnight, as pasture grasses and small grains wake from winter dormancy, pushing tender shoots heavenward. Clusters of tiny, infant leaves unfurl among the ragged, old stems of alfalfa clumps. And scattered chickweed stands that have hung out in old corn fields through the freezin' season thicken up into plow-choking carpets of thick,

slick greenery.

At the same time, the sheer physical demands of trying to fertilize and lime fields, till and work ground, move seed, plant and start the first harvest of forage — while keeping up with all the regular daily milking, feeding and equipment maintenance — have farmers trying to cram 25-hours-worth of work into every 24-hour day.

On dairy and livestock farms, enrichment of the soils with manure becomes the most pressing chore, especially after this winter of endless snow and weeks of inability to haul anything, anywhere, out onto fields.

"Is that where they're supposed to be?" was the puzzled question asked recently by Angela, my tee-

naged teammate for the evening milking. One evening previous, the calves had nuzzled at the hand from atop a thick accumulation of winter bedding. Now, they stood a couple of feet lower on the concrete floor of the pen, looking much shorter and smaller.

Thick bedding packs were actually a bonus this year, generating heat to keep the cattle housing warmer, draining moisture off the top of the straw for drier conditions and helping to insulate water pipes and fountains. But you can get too much of a good thing — and most every keeper of livestock we know has an abundance of rich manure to enhance this year's food and forage production.

So much to do. So little time. Potato-growing friends finally could hustle to their higher, better-drained fields, already several

weeks behind schedule for tucking in the first seed spuds. Cool-weather lovers, potatoes perform best when planted early. But then, nothing has been done early thus far this season.

One critical agriculture input may be almost skipped entirely this growing season. Lime, that natural, organic, powdery white stuff that sweetens acid-prone soils, boosts the performance of fertilizers and enhances the growth and yields of numerous crops, is likely to be left along the wayside in the seasonal time crunch.

Lime spreading generally begins in the fall and continues right through the winter, whenever fields are dry enough to handle

equipment without burying it up to the axles in mud. With a wet fall, 80-days of continual snow-pack and ongoing April showers (April snow someplaces), liming this year was plain wishful thinking.

Now, liming is just one more trip across the field that farmers don't have time to make.

Meanwhile, we diehard gardeners are raking away old leaves and mulch, checking for asparagus and rhubarb shoots, probing for signs of winter survival on shrubs and roses, moving perennials and just generally reveling the earth's rebirth.

So much to do. So little time. But, gosh, it sure feels great to get the hands dirty in the ground again.

Are These Foods Safe To Eat?

CREAMERY (Montgomery Co.) — Rate your food handling savvy by choosing the examples that could result in foods unsafe for a person with a weakened immune system to eat.

- Teresa and her grandmother ordered hamburgers at the local fast food restaurant. When they bit into the hamburgers, they saw that the meat was red inside.

- Juan, who is HIV positive, wanted cooked shrimp to put in a cold salad. At the deli, he saw cooked and raw shrimp displayed together on the same bed of ice. Juan bought the cooked shrimp.

- Before Ina began to prepare coleslaw at home, she took off her ring and put it on the counter while she washed her hands carefully for 20 seconds using a scrub brush. Then she put her ring back on and went to work. She finished chopping the vegetables for the coleslaw and used her hands to toss it.

- Fred's grandfather had eaten his eggs sunny side up with a runny yolk all his life and had never gotten sick. He feels he has lived a

long time and deserves to have his eggs cooked the way he wants them.

- Bill made a big pot of chili con carne for his noon lunch. After lunch, he turned off the stove and let the chili cool in the pot. Before he went out at 4 p.m. he put the chili pot in the refrigerator.

- Seo-Hyun wiped her hands on a dishtowel after handling raw chicken and before preparing salads.

- Jose was cooking a ground beef and green bean casserole. He put a thermometer into the middle of the casserole so that it did not touch the bottom of the dish. The temperature was 165 degrees F. Among the seven scenarios, Jose's meal was the only one safe to eat. Surprised? Here's what wrong with each of the above.

Teresa might be okay with the rare hamburger but her grandmother is at high risk. It's even worse to eat a rare hamburger than to consume a rare steak — there's more processing so more chance of contamination.

Juan should have refused to buy shrimp at the deli, the raw shrimp could easily have contaminated the cooked shrimp while in the ice.

Most of you probably discovered Ina's mistake — she put her ring back on which wasn't washed before starting to work.

Fred's grandfather is now more susceptible to food borne illnesses because of his age and needs to be sure his eggs are fully cooked.

Bill has lots of people sharing his mistakes. First, he allowed the chili to stand at a dangerous temperature for too long a time. Penn State's recommendation. Hot food needs to be refrigerated within 2 hours. The best growing temperature for bacteria are 40°-140° F (room temperature). Secondly, when Bill did put the chili in the refrigerator, he did it incorrectly.

Seo-Hyun's problem is an example of cross contamination. She didn't wash her hands before continuing with the salad. The raw chicken she handled earlier can easily contaminate the salad. If you have a food safety question please call Penn State Cooperative Extension (610) 489-4315 and ask for Annette Goodling. If you work with church groups or fire companies and would like to address food safety issues, Penn State Cooperative Extension has workshops available for your group.

Milk Peddlers

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bring \$50 a bottle." To seal the bottle tops, Nelda tamped in a thin cardboard disk that had printed on it Peachey Raw Milk.

There is one story that Nelda remembers clearly — the time he and Paul Civitts, another milk hauler, were arrested.

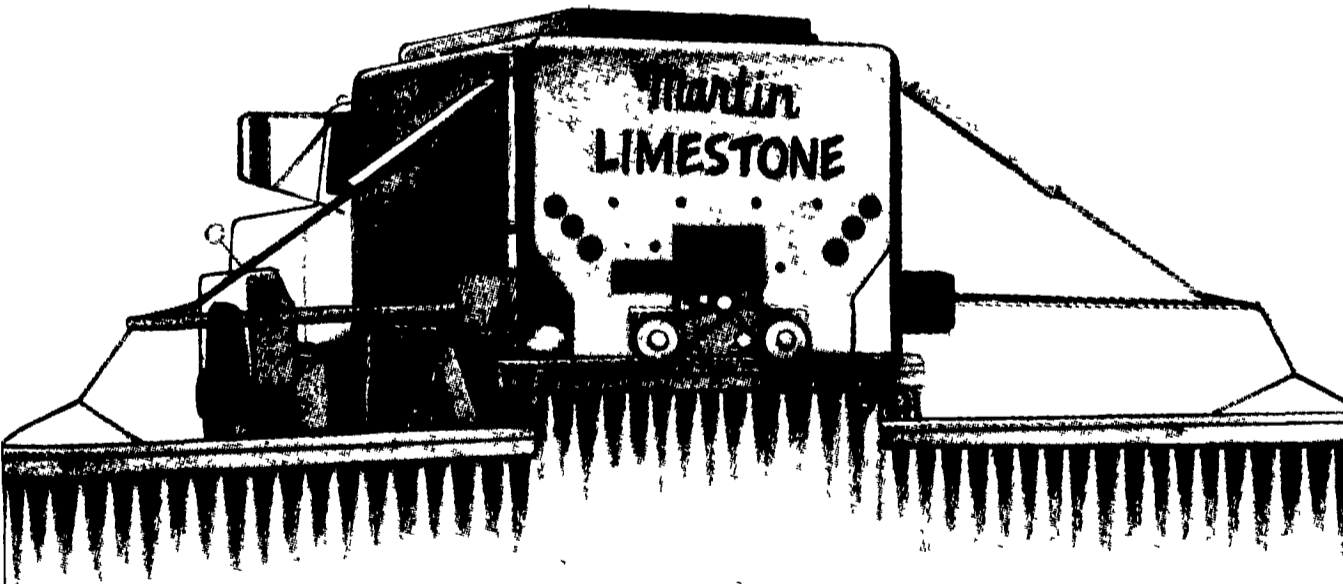
"We were fined for selling milk for 8 cents a quart. This was a cent or two below what we should have been selling it for. We went into Lewistown and had to get a lawyer. He never said a word and

charged us \$25 each."

I asked why he sold milk for less.

"We thought it was enough. It was too much for people to pay."

Nelda said he wouldn't be too fond of going back to delivering milk that way again, but he does like to see pictures of the old days. Nelda's wife Miriam passed away 30 years ago. Nelda has two daughters, Anna Margaret Yoder and Sara Yoder, seven grandchildren, and eight great grandchildren.



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