

Check Chimney Before Winter Starts

UNIVERSITY PARK, (Centre Co.) — A crackling fire in a fireplace or woodstove can make even a cold winter pleasant. But enjoying a fire requires more than just tossing a few logs on the grate or in the stove, says a safety specialist in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

To stay safe as well as warm, people with woodstoves and fireplaces should prevent chimney fires before winter starts, says Dr. Dennis Murphy, professor of agricultural and biological engineering. "Your chimney may be waiting to burst into flames," he says.

"Make sure your chimney is cleaned and undamaged. Creosote, a flammable, oily compound produced by burning wood, can build up even with the best woodstoves. Thick creosote deposits can clog your chimney. Even worse, the creosote could ignite."

lish, and many others. Naturally there were many religious groups too — such as Lutherans, Presbyterians, Quakers, Catholics and Jews. No wonder our country is called a "melting pot."

You can inspect and clean your own chimney. "You should do a visual inspection a couple of times each month during heavy use," Murphy says. "Insert a mirror in the chimney cleanout opening to see if creosote is building up or if any damage, such as cracks in the chimney liner, has occurred."

If you spot damage, call a professional chimney repair service. Otherwise, periodic maintenance should keep your home safe.

"Chimney cleaning tools are available at most hardware stores," Murphy says. "Just be sure to buy a brush that's the right size and shape, as well as enough extensions to reach the entire length of your chimney. Once you've cleaned it, do a visual inspection. You should be able to see the inner tile or liner. If you have cleaned the chimney well enough, you will be able to spot cracks or other damage."

If a chimney fire occurs and is put out quickly, the chimney may

appear undamaged. "But even a brief fire can crack the chimney liner and brick or block structures that surround the chimney," Murphy says. "This creates a greater potential for more serious fires."

Murphy offers several other tips for safe operation of fireplaces and woodstoves. "Be sure the chimney, pipes and stove are installed properly. If you have any doubts, your local building inspector or fire department can help. Also, have a professional check your entire operation at least once each heating season, especially if you use a woodstove as your primary heating source.

"Always follow manufacturer's instructions, especially where temperature limits are concerned. When a fire burns too cool, creosote builds up more quickly. A stove burning too hot can cause a fire. Temperature monitors for chimneys can help you determine exactly how hot your fire is burning."

Ida's Notebook

by
Ida Risser



This year we will have two Thanksgivings. Our daughter, who lives in New Jersey, invited us to her home. Then she found that she had to work on Thursday and so she changed the invitation to Sunday. Therefore, we'll probably celebrate with a chicken on Thanksgiving and a turkey on Sunday. I've promised to supply the pumpkin pies and baked corn. It will be the first time for years that I have not stuffed a big turkey.

When our six children were home, we usually had relatives invited for the meal. The girls made bread and the boys baked cakes. Often we could sit down at the table and say that everything on the table was raised on our farm. It was a good feeling.

Since we have had a warm November, we're still picking from our ever-bearing strawberries. Even my calendulas have extra large yellow blossoms. And, I've planted a number of geraniums into pots as the frost has not hurt them. Ordinarily, I only bring impatiens and begonias into the house for winter. They have red, white, pink and purple blossoms and add a bit of color to winter months.

Recently, we heard a speaker talk about the diversity of people in Lancaster County. As he was an historian, he started from the 1600s when Swiss Mennonites came after getting a grant from William Penn. They were followed by Scotch, Irish, German, Eng-

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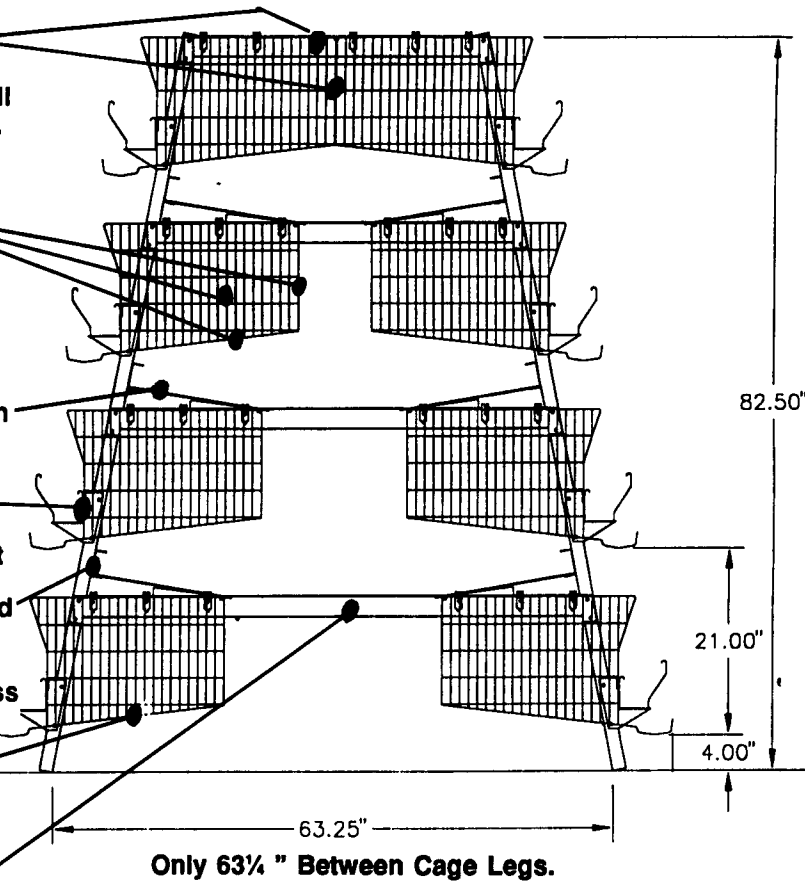
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