

On being a farm wife - And other hazards Joyce Bupp



"Jax is nimble! Jax is quick!
"Jax jumps up and down - and
kicks!" (...with apologies to Mother
Goose).

The verdict is mostly in on our
summer crop of new heifers. These
are our two-year-old bovines that
have had their first calves, joining
the dairy herd as they begin producing
milk in response to their maturity into
motherhood.

Like any crop, the heifers are
producing a mixed yield. There are
a couple that you love for their
growthy size and good udders,
milk production ability, adaptability
in joining the herd and for their
quiet, loveable temperaments.

There are also a couple at the
other extreme that are clueless
about finding their own stalls,
respecting gates or understanding
that the proper place to lie down
and rest is on the grass or dry
ground of the exercise lot, not the
goopiest "mud" puddle around.

And then, like all crops, this
one has a weed or two.

Like Jax. Jax is a medium-sized
Holstein heifer, good appetite,
even is learning to find her own
stall. Well, once in awhile. After
most of the rest have found theirs
and hers is the only left in that
vicinity of the barn. Walking
down through the double rows of
black-and-whites, she stands out
from the rest of the "girls" in no
significant way whatsoever. Just
another herd member.

Until you make a move to do
anything with her. Then she turns
flakey.

Jumps around. Dances back
and forth. Tries to grab your hair
when you have your head in near
her to wash and prep her for milking.
Now, we always have an affectionate
pet or two in the herd that will
try to lick at your arm or grab your
hair when your head is down close
to her flank — as

close to nuzzling you as a cow
generally gets.

But, Jax's intentions are not
affectionate. We've never had a
heifer that tried to bite you —
horses often do — but given the
opportunity, I suspect Jax would
yank a hunk of hair right out of
your scalp. With a piece of scalp
attached probably.

And she has one of the most
lethal tails I've ever seen on a cow.
I regularly trim the cows switches
to a fairly-short length, to minimize
the amount of dirt and manure they
pick up with them to slather all over
themselves, other cows — and the
people who milk them. Jax has an
extraordinarily long tail, all bone
and little switch on the end — and
knows precisely where to club you
on the head with it. First, she makes
sure it is properly wet and dirty.
Weird thing about Jax is that, once
the milker is on her udder and the
milk flowing, she generally just
stands there and makes little more
fuss.

I'm trying to be patient with
her. Really I am. Really.

Margaret, on the other hand, is
a first-calf heifer of a gentler kind.
Tall, big-bodied and maybe just a
bit gangly, like a fast-growing
teenager that hasn't quite learned
to handle her body with grace, she
has the personality of a little
pussycat. When Margaret nuzzles
you, it's with affection.

She even has a sense of humor.
Last evening, she slipped away as
I went to milk her and led me on a
likely game of tag up, down and
around the barn. It took about
three innings of this barn tag (and
I was "it" on all of them) to finally
get Margaret back in where she
belonged.

In this post-harvest time of
year, most farmers take stock of
the year's crops and make plans
for the next.

For next year's heifer crop, I'd

Let The Buyer Beware This Holiday Season

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre
Co.) — The saying, "A fool and
his money are soon parted," can
be especially true during the holi-
day season. With the hectic pace
and frazzled nerves that many
people experience at this time of
year, it's easy to get careless when
making spending decisions.

But there are a few tips to keep
in mind that can help you avoid
unpleasant shopping experiences,
according to a family resource
specialist in Penn State's College
of Agricultural Sciences.

"With a lithe bit of common
sense, you can make holiday gift-
buying relatively painless," said
Dr. Marilyn Furry, associate pro-
fessor of extension education.

"First of all, shop only in rep-
utable stores," said Furry. "Avoid
unlicensed street peddlers or ven-
dors who canvass office build-
ings, offering special deals on
high-priced items. If you do con-
sider merchandise from such a
vendor, only buy an item with no
moving parts and be sure it can be
thoroughly inspected."

Furry said you should ask
about a store's refund and
exchange policy when buying
gifts, and keep all receipts. "Also,
study any warranty before you
buy," she said. "If you don't
understand it, have it explained to
you."

Set spending limits for gifts,
decorations and holiday entertain-
ment, and try to use credit cards in
moderation, Furry said. "Don't let
the ease of charging tempt you
into extending yourself," she said.
"Payment due dates and high

finance charges have a way of
sneaking up on you."

If you do charge items, Furry
recommends checking the receipts
and credit card slips against the
statement you receive in the mail
to make sure the bill is correct.

"Your statement must reach
you at least two weeks before pay-
ment is due," she said. "Don't let
a store assess finance charges on
unpaid balances if your late pay-
ment is due to their failure to mail
your statement on time."

If a dispute arises over a billing
error, do not write a note on the
bill. Instead, said Furry, write a
separate letter to the store, prefer-
ably by certified mail, explaining
the problem. The store or credit
card company cannot make an
unfavorable report to a credit rat-
ing firm while the dispute is in
progress.

Some people prefer the conve-
nience of shopping at home
through mail-order catalogs. But
Furry said that can be risky unless
you order from reputable compa-
nies.

"Mail-order merchandise can
arrive late or defective, or may not
come at all," she said. "If the com-
pany can't deliver the items with-
in 30 days, they must notify you in
writing, giving you the option to
cancel the order for a full refund
or accept a later delivery date." For
information on reputable
mail-order companies, check the
October 1994 issue of Consumer
Reports magazine.

Furry said if you receive
unordered gifts or packages in the
mail, they are yours to keep. "By
law, you are not responsible for
merchandise you have not
ordered," she said. "You do not
have to return the merchandise or
pay for it."

But use caution when receiving
C.O.D. packages for you or your
neighbor. "Accept C.O.D. pack-
ages only when they're expected,"
said Furry. "Don't pay the post of-
fice for a surprise package — the
surprise may be more than you
bargained for, such as gift-
wrapped stones."

Beef Industry Wins Award

CHICAGO — The checkoff-
funded *LunchPower! Healthy
School Lunches* program, a guide
to reducing fat and sodium in
school lunch meals, was recently
awarded the respected Presidents'
Circle Nutrition Education Award
from The American Dietetic Asso-
ciation and its Foundation.

The award was presented to the
Beef Industry Council (BIC) dur-
ing ADA's 77th Annual Meeting,
October 17-20 in Orlando, Fla.

The Presidents' Circle Award was
established in 1983 to honor an
organization or government
agency for excellence in develop-
ing scientifically sound nutrition
information that is "unique in con-
cept, creative in presentation, and
free from specific commercial
message or endorsement." The
BIC is a division of the National
Live Stock and Meat Board, which
also won the Presidents' Circle
Award in 1986 for the Meat Nutri-
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