

On Being a Farm Wife
(and other hazards)
Joyce Bupp



Every profession has its hazards.

Truck drivers are constantly aware of the possibility of a vehicular accident ahead along the endless miles of roads, shared with what we all label those "idiots" behind the wheel.

Data processors deal with the pain and surgery of carpal tunnel syndrome from hours, weeks, years spent with their fingers and hands held in "typing position," poking keyboards.

Teachers suffer burnout, stock brokers trade in stress and obstetricians sometimes go without sleep because babies steadfastly refuse to be born during normal office hours. Electricians sometimes have shocking work problems, phone repair service people get called out in bad weather and nurses are needed by overwork.

Farming, however, still ranks up there at the top of the hazardous profession list, beaten out on survey lists generally only by coal mining. And, with the technological advances in the field of mining toward more mechanization and less backwork, that may have slipped from top spot.

Farmers are prone to a whole litany of work-related health haz-

ards: injuries from livestock and machinery, from broken bones to loss of limbs, wounds from sharp metal and protruding nails, eye problems due to carelessness about using protective glasses when grinding metals, chemical exposures, deafness from long periods of exposure to throbbing equipment, slipping on manure (which OSHA did warn us some years ago in a brochure was slippery), lifting too-heavy items and on and on, ad infinitum.

Like many of his peers, The Farmer lives with the periodically painful affliction of "cranky" knees, from years of working with cattle combined with the proverbial old high school football injuries. Sometimes, they play little cracking rhythms when he walks. If a storm is approaching I might catch him limping. Modern medicine can do wonders with knees today—one of these years he'll be a candidate.

But on what professional problem can I blame the affliction which (struck me with an irritating vengeance last week? I crawled out of bed one morning, opened my mouth to say something—and nothing came out but a muted squeak.

Traditionally, the beginning of a New Year brings renewed interest in achieving a slimmer waistline. There is much information out there about weight—unfortunately not all of it is accurate.

To someone who likes to yakkety-yak as much as I do, the scourge of laryngitis is a major pain in the neck. So to speak. Except there was no pain. Just a blank, like someone turned off the sound. My mom suffers with the same occasional affliction, so maybe it's hereditary.

Worse, it was on a morning of a major meeting, populated with a host of fellow farmers who thought my uncharacteristic and unplanned silence was hilarious.

"You sound like Kermit the Frog," joked one. Hey, as Kermit would say, it isn't easy being green.

"Boy, The Farmer will be happy," gleefully grinned another.

"Did you sleep with your feet out from under the covers?" "What kind of partying were you up to?" "Was this from yelling for Penn State in the Rose Bowl?"

Actually, the Man Upstairs just decided I should shut up for a couple of days, the better to exercise my ears. And, since I had made no New Year's resolutions, maybe Someone was offering a rather pointed suggestion.

However, one kind stranger, expressing sympathy, wished me a speedy return of my voice and a hope that I'd soon be back, able to sing opera.

Now that would be a real miracle of healing.

I could never sing opera before.

Healthy Weight Facts

Let's see if we can sort some of the facts from the fiction.

Myth: The scale is the best way to determine if you're fit or fat.

Reality: The scale does not reflect your body composition; it does not discriminate between fluid or fat weight. Facts to consider:

- It takes 3,500 calories to make one pound of fat.

- Two cups of water weighs one pound.

- Sudden weight changes are usually from fluid shifts in the body.

- If your weight suddenly rose five pounds, it would require an extra 17,500 calories from food.

After reading these statistics you might decide to limit your liquid intake. The Penn State weight-maintenance/weight-loss program, *My New Weigh of Life*, requests participants to drink six to eight glasses of water a day. The body needs the liquid so it can function at its best. Drinking fluids provides a sense of stomach fullness, maintains water balance, aids the kidneys, and prevents constipation. Studies also show that often people eat when, in reality, they are thirsty. Somehow, the signals have gotten confused. The next time you feel hungry drink a tall glass of water and wait a few minutes to see if hunger pains fade.

It might be a revolutionary thought, but many people find

they are more successful with maintaining their weight AFTER they throw out the scales. Look in the mirror. Are you happy with what you see? For many people that's the best judge—not the scales. When your clothes feel a little tight, it's time to put the breaks on your current mode of eating and increase your exercise.

Myth: A low-calorie diet is the best way to achieve a healthy weight.

Reality: Chronic dieting, under eating, or skipping meals can contribute to a sluggish metabolism, which could make it harder to lose weight. Fueling metabolism is like stoking a fire—remove the wood and the fire diminishes. Similarly, to fuel our metabolism we must consume a sufficient amount of calories or our bodies will slow down to compensate.

Myth: Simply increasing aerobic activity guarantees you will reach your metabolic peak.

Reality: While aerobic exercise, such as cycling or jogging, can help boost metabolism; research shows that strength training, such as weight lifting, plays a vital role. Weight-bearing activities help build and maintain muscle growth. The more muscle you have, the more metabolically active your body is, meaning you burn more calories. See, shoveling snow this winter is really helping Pennsylvanians to be healthier!

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