



the toasty brown shade. Stripes would indicate periods of "bad" with periods of a more pleasant kind of cold weather. The kind of winter that lets you round bale corn fodder on New Year's Day and then shovel snow to get to the Farm Show.

So consider this, friends: I've seen four Woolly Bears thus far this fall. Two of them were a light brown color with small bands of black at either end. Two of them had NO black on their coats at all. An indicator of a very mild winter.

Who're you gonna' believe?

A dairy farm friend from Iowa further complicates the weather prognostication with more "facts." He says that you can predict the winter by the husks of sweet corn. If the husks on those wonderful, delicious treats are tightly wrapped, Nature's providing a snug cocoon in which those baby seeds could hibernate — if you, the deer, the raccoons and the groundhogs didn't get them first. If they're more loose, and the ends quick to protrude, look for a more pleasant stretch.

Every sweet corn ear I've husked this year was wrapped as thick and tight as if a professional gift wrapper had personally prepared them. I don't recall a single ear tip protruding through the heavy husk layer.

So, who're you gonna' believe?

Perhaps it's best to play safe against the odds.

Get your salt. Get your extra snow shovel. Make sure your tires are well-treaded and the stack of firewood plentiful and dry.

I've always have had a special affection for those cute, furry Woolly Bears.

So don't bury your shorts and sneakers too far away in the back of the closet.



**Penn Yan FFA Makes Its Mark At The State Fair**  
 Marcy Quackenbush  
 Penn Yan FFA Reporter

treasurer), Marcy Quackenbush (PY FFA reporter), and Aaron Vaughan (PY FFA sentinel). The contest consisted of a dairy management quiz, pedigree selection, sire selection, linear evaluation, and the judging of six classes of cattle. Oral reasons were given for two classes. Approximately 19 teams from all over the state participated in this contest. The Penn Yan Chapter of FFA placed sixth overall in the state. In the individual placings, Natalie Jensen placed third out of approximately 50 participants.

The Penn Yan Chapter of FFA was well represented at the Great New York State Fair, Aug. 22 - Sept. 2 in Syracuse.

Penn Yan FFA members competed in three difficult and challenging career development event contests.

On the opening day of the 150th Great New York State Fair, Aaron Vaughn (PY FFA sentinel) of Marcus Whitman participated in the state FFA tractor operators contest, senior division. The contest consisted of a quiz based on the Federal Hazardous Occupations Order Training Program, tractor operation, and the identification of tractor parts. Aaron also had to maneuver a two-wheeled and four-wheeled wagon to complete the contest. Aaron, out of the many participants, placed 11th in the state.

On Tuesday, Aug. 27, three Penn Yan FFA members competed in the state FFA dairy cattle judging contest. The members included Natalie Jensen (PY FFA

On Saturday, Aug. 31, Scott Fisher and Matt Fritz (PY FFA vice president) participated in the welding contest. The contest consisted of a written test, welding three plates together, making two fillet welds and two lap welds, using two different electrodes, piercing a plat for a 1/2-inch bolt, and making a one-inch square pad one pass. The team placed third out of five teams. In the individual standings Matt Fritz took fifth, and Scott Fisher took eighth.

Helping prepare the teams for the contest were Mike Lilyea; Jennifer Jensen; and Penn Yan FFA adviser, John Kriese.

Uh huh.  
 So who're you gonna' believe? Reports are that the almanacs for next year (which I haven't yet read) are foretelling of another upcoming Arctic-reminiscent winter. Long. Cold. Snowy. Blustery.

Good for skiing and snowboarding. Good for hot chocolate and marshmallows in front of a fireplace full of crackling logs. Good for snuggling down with an afghan, a good book, and the cat curled up in your lap.

Good for stocking up extra bread in the freezer and stashing away a few quarts of long-shelf-life milk in your pantry.

Wait.  
 Before you dig out the heavy comforters for the bed . . . before you go stock up on bags of melting salt and an extra snowscraper . . . before you stuff the cellar with potatoes, consider this.

Have you checked out the Woolly Bears?

You know, Woolly Bears. The fuzzy, fall-appearing, Teddy-bear-

like caterpillars endowed with mystical, magical weather-forecasting abilities. Woolly Bears, according to our Golden Nature Guide of Insects, is the larvae of the Isabella Moth, a common species of moth we probably all have around but few of us think about.

If I recall my Woolly Bear lore correctly, the intenseness of winter will be in correspondence with the amount of black on the caterpillar's furry hide.

All all-black Woolly Bear portends a winter of "I remember whens . . ." Like, "I remember the year we had a snow that dumped 32 inches in one storm and gave us a whole week off from school." (1960, I think.) Or, "I remember the year we all climbed up on the barn roof to shovel off snow because we were worried about all the long-span barn roofs that were caving in." (1996)

A more normal winter — whatever that is — would have a caterpillar of about half black and half

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