

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



Saturday night. For much of the populous, it's an evening of relaxation. Maybe dinner out with friends. A date or a movie. A few hours at the mall.

But in numerous professions, Saturday nights are business as usual. On duty are restaurant, retailing, convenience store, and service station personnel. Police, fire and emergency crews. Farmers with calving cows.

Our gal laboring in a boxstall couldn't care less that it was Saturday night. A first-calf heifer, Cherry, was making little progress toward her delivery. She was in considerable discomfort and the calf was perhaps in trouble.

The year's first invasion of arctic air had settled in, bringing single-digit temperatures. Water fountains needed periodic thawing. Tractors grumbled and balked at starting. Every time the barn's large doors opened, the clashing cold outside and warm inside air created instant, interior fog.

Edges of a newborn calf's ears can freeze on a night like this. In fact, a newborn calf, if not clean,

dry and sheltered under such conditions, could even die of exposure. Thus, this about-to-be-mother has been confined in a warmer, drier, safer area.

Cherry didn't understand any of these facts ... or care. New heifers are unpredictable with all the strange things happening to them. Some settled down quickly and allow help to be given. Others go scatterbrained. (Rarely, one may even come after the caregiver, as one recently did to me when I tried to help her newborn.)

Knowing that Cherry had some sort of problem, it was necessary to get her standing still long enough for The Farmer to check the position of the calf. But Cherry did circles around the pen. She danced around the stall. She sniffed at the pile of silage in the stall's feed trough, then tried to shove out through the open side. And got herself stuck.

Ever try to back up a 1200-pound animal, on her knees, when she wanted to go forward? After some pushing, pulling and

prodding, she was finally backed out. Only to return to dancing, circling, and trying to repeat the escape attempt. I grabbed a shovel, stood it on end across the opening and parked myself beside it.

And hoped she didn't realize how useless that would be if she really put her mind to crawling out that spot. But it provided enough of a visibility distraction to give The Farmer a few moments to confirm that the calf was indeed twisted out of proper position.

Cherry seemed to sense that she needed help and stood still long enough to be tied and the calf's body straightened. Ropes were slipped over the calf's protruding feet and we began to slowly pull. Though we had both shed outer layers of sweatshirts and were down to our matching brown-twill, insulated, bib overalls, we were still sweating.

"Must be warming up," figured The Farmer, echoing my earlier observation about the weather on this frozen Saturday night.

Because of her earlier problems, Cherry needed a little time to dilate. She cooperatively stood still, while we kept a steady pulling pressure on the calf. Her sides heaved periodically, as she pushed, and slowly the calf's wet body came into view. With one final push from her, it plopped down onto the soft sawdust.

"Bull," groaned The Farmer, disappointed.

Steam rose around us as we put away ropes, gathered up the discarded sweatshirts, gloves and hats and exited the milk house. Outside, the stars twinkled and the

moon shone brightly. My bare hand stuck to the metal door. The thermometer registered six degrees.

But, inside, one mother was

contentedly licking dry her newborn little fellow.

All in all, not a bad way to spend a Saturday night.

## Conservation District Tree Sales Begin

SUNBURY (Northumberland Co.) — The Northumberland County Conservation District has announced its 1997 tree sale has begun and customers can now place their orders. Trees are to be picked up at the district office in mid-April, weather permitting. Actual date of pickup will be announced later.

The conservation district is again selling a wide variety of evergreen and ornamental tree seedlings, ground covers, shrubs, fruit trees, and small fruits. Wild-flower seeds will also be available as well as planting and maintenance supplies, such as fertilizer packets, tree protectors, and weed control mats.

New items this year include Sargent Crabapple, Purpleleaf Sandcherry, Scarlet Curly Willow, Bankers Dwarf Willow, Dwarf Burningbush, and Yellowberry Holly.

The goal of the annual tree sale is to make reasonably priced trees and plants available for purchase, thereby enabling customers to contribute to the conservation of valuable natural resources on their land, such as soil, water, wildlife,

and forest resources, while at the same time beautifying their property.

It is the belief of the board of directors of the Northumberland County Conservation District that planting trees and other items is one way we can make an investment in the future and be environmentally responsible.

Proceeds from the tree sale are used by the conservation district to spread the conservation message with educational programs for children and adults and to assist landowners in solving conservation problems and applying conservation practices.

Anyone who placed a call into the conservation district office within the past six months requesting an order form and who has not received it by now is asked to again contact the office. Also, if your address has changed since last year, please give us a call.

To receive an order form for the 1997 tree sale, you may call (717) 988-4224, or stop by the Northumberland County Conservation District office on Plum Creek Road, RD 3, Sunbury.



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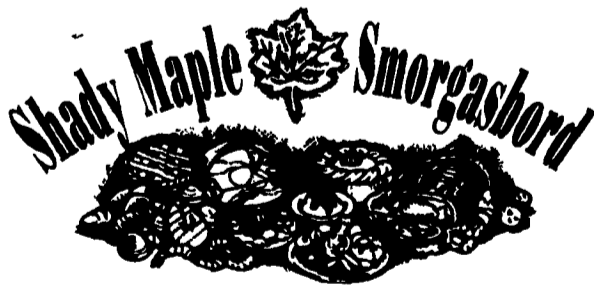
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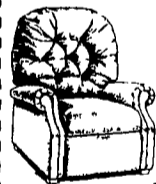
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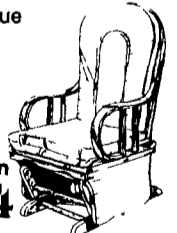
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