

Rural Areas Becoming Dumping

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The PFB wants at least a five-cent deposit placed on bottles and cans as an incentive to recycle. Incidentally, a news conference was held at the Kopp Farm more than 13 years ago to show the need for a mandatory deposit on bottles and cans.

On Monday, Donaldson and Kopp walked along some of the road frontage of the Kopp Farm, picking up bottles, cans, and other trash that motorists illegally dumped from their vehicles.

Kopp said, "Bottles are the culprits of a lot of cut tires on our farm machinery." He held up a sharp piece of a brown beer bottle that could slice through a tractor tire, resulting in a repair job costing between \$50-\$100, he said. It costs \$800 to replace a tractor tire.

Kopp also pointed out a dire threat to the livestock — pieces of aluminum cans. Cans which are thrown haphazardly into hay fields get caught up in forage harvesters and shredded, mixing with feed. Kopp showed those who attended the conference pieces of the shredded cans that have ended up in the feed bunk.

Even though the harvester is equipped with magnets that can capture iron and steel, the magnets have no effect on aluminum.

Autopsies of dead cattle are expensive and are only performed, according to Kopp, when a chronic health problem is suspected. But what about a few downed animals that die of mysterious causes? Kopp said, "I have to wonder — is some of (the trash) getting into their stomachs and cutting holes in their stomachs and causing complications?"

It's hard to put a dollar estimate on the kind of financial losses tallied as a result of cows eating the litter-contaminated forage, Kopp admitted. But it could run easily into thousands of dollars.

Opponents of the proposed Bottle Bill have said that mandatory township recycling laws have done much to stem the flow of trash into farmers' fields. But "the recycling law is not working to solve the problems we have out here in the country," said Kopp.

In Londonderry Township, home to about 2,500 residents, there is no mandatory recycling law. However, townships bordering Londonderry, including Derry and Swatara and Lower Swatara, have recycling laws. Kopp said there must be some kind of financial incentive for people to recycle the cans and bottles. Now, however, people see no value in the trash and simply toss it out the window.

"Our society has become such a throwaway society," said Kopp, "that we don't want to take responsibility to dispose of any of our litter."

Kopp said one day he was working in the field and saw a pickup truck coming down the road. A man was leaning out of the passenger side window. Kopp saw an arm dangling out the window and a bottle went flying — the passenger was trying to hit a road sign as they drove by.

A lot of underage drinkers also drive the miles of road frontage and have to get rid of the "evidence," Kopp noted. He's seen whole cases of beer dropped out of the window and land on his field.

"It seems like weekends are our biggest time for litter. People are out partying and probably a lot of that is underage drinking. I found here yesterday cans, not even bottles, not even open yet, lying alongside the road . . . beer, mostly."

People don't have the incentive to keep the bottles and cans they buy, sometimes before they come home from work, for recycling. Many people won't make that extra effort to put that trash in the recycling bin, insisted Kopp.

A five-cent deposit on bottles and cans would change that.

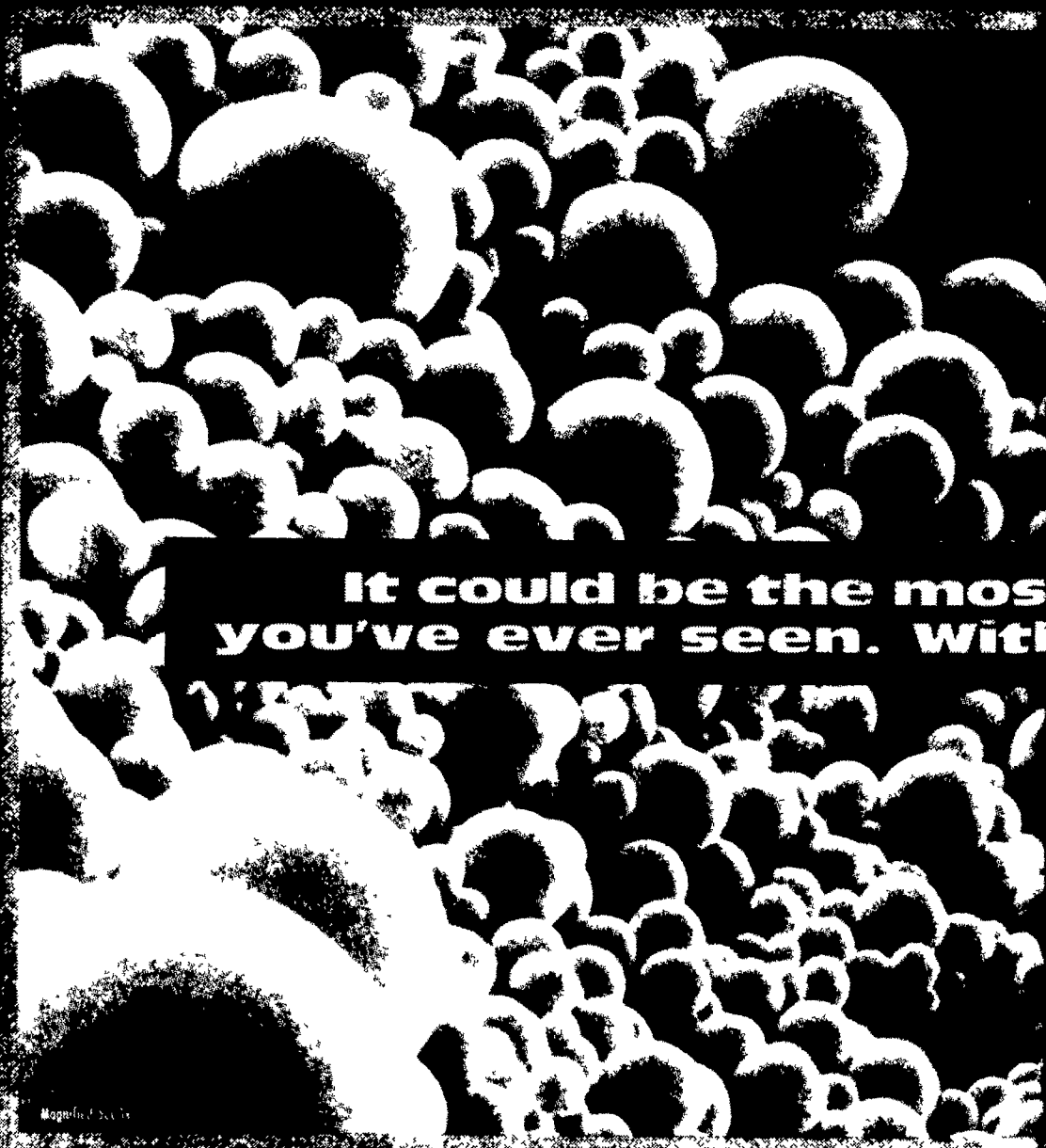
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Kopp held up a sharp piece of glass from a broken bottle — a real culprit to tires on the farm.



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