

# Without Bottle Bill, Farm Cows Die, And

## Part 1 Of A Series

**Editor's Note:** Farmers are running out of patience. Every day without a Pennsylvania Bottle Bill means another day of picking up hazardous trash in the field, watching cows die from consuming the trash dumped on the acres farmers need to make

was a sharp piece of aluminum from a can.

"Our society has become such a throwaway society," said Ronald Kopp, who operates a 100-milking-cow, 800-acre dairy with his brother Jay and family near Middletown. "(Our society doesn't) want to take responsibility to dispose of any of our litter."

**Beer cans are a real culprit. They can destroy knives on the forage harvesters. Like pieces of glass, they cut tires. Pieces of aluminum cans end up in the feed, killing cattle.**

their living, and worrying how much destruction of their equipment they can afford.

Part one of the Bottle Bill Series will look at the frustrations farmers have faced while lobbying for the statewide passage of a Bottle Bill. The bill is under consideration by the state legislature to place a deposit on aluminum and glass containers — the same containers that end up in fields, destroying equipment and livestock.

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—Dairyman Roland Feeg reaches down to pick up an old fruit juice

**He remembers a 4-year-old pregnant cow, Pam, milking 29,000 pounds, one of his best producers. One day, he turned his head to look at her. She coughed, fell to the ground, and died in seconds.**

bottle covered with dirt, filled with some rain water, lying in the grass.

"I wish it would bounce back and hit them," he said, as he motions with the bottle to the cars that pass by his farm, often throwing trash directly into his hay field along Rt. 419 north of Womelsdorf.

Sharp edges of the smashed bottle could have ended up in the forage if Feeg didn't take precious time away from work to pick it up.

Beer cans are a real culprit. They can destroy knives on the forage harvesters. Like pieces of glass, they cut tires. Pieces of aluminum cans end up in the feed, killing cattle.

Chester County dairy farmer Tim Barlow knows what it is like to lose cattle to trash in the forage. He remembers a 4-year-old pregnant cow, Pam, milking 29,000 pounds, one of his best producers. One day, he turned his head to look at her. She coughed, fell to the ground, and died in seconds.

"That was a \$2,000 cow," he said. "Now it's gone."

Cause of death? Pam had no health problems. She was a healthy cow. Barlow strongly suspects it

found "cans, not even bottles, not even open yet, lying alongside the road . . . beer, mostly."

George Moyer, who helps manage Mor-Dale Farms in Myerstown, has spent many weekends walking along road frontage, picking up can and bottle trash that could wreak havoc with his farm equipment and end up in the forage.

He has been waiting patiently, along with thousands of farmers, while state legislators are considering the passage of House Bill 922. The bill would mandate a minimum 5 cent deposit on glass and aluminum containers, which the state General Assembly finds "are a major source of litter and solid waste within this Commonwealth and a direct threat to the health and safety of the citizens of Pennsylvania," as outlined in the bill.

"There are absolutely no legislators that would get up early on a Sunday or Monday morning and pick up cans or bottles in their yard before they go to work," said Moyer. "Many (legislators) are well-to-do, secluded, off the road."

Moyer, like many farmers who

have been lobbying along with the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau to push passage of the bill, are showing obvious signs of frustration. They are fed up with taking valuable time away from chores and marketing their product to pick up other people's trash.

They are out of patience.

Ronald Kopp, Middletown dairy farmer, 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.

Tim Barlow, a dairy farmer in Cochranville, has found slivers of bottle and other can trash in the forage. He cuts hay at his farm, which has a couple miles of front-

glass or aluminum. A shredded back tire costs \$500-\$600 to replace. If repairable, the tire costs between \$100-\$150, in addition to

ous illnesses they see in cattle attributable to trash in the field? It is possible to find out. Autopsies of dead cattle are expensive and are

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downtime. A flat front tire can run from \$80-\$90 a piece.

A forage chopper knife was broken by a can in the field, costing \$100 to repair, Barlow said.

At a press conference early this year at his Middletown farm, Ronald 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

only performed, according to Kopp, when a chronic health problem is suspected. Barlow said it costs \$70 for a cow autopsy.

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 (cows') stomachs and cutting holes in their stomachs and causing complications?"

Barlow also wonders whether some of the sore feet on cows, such as hoof cracks and whatnot, could be caused by stepping on broken glass and cans in fields.

Like Moyer (whose son Ralph won a Dairy of Distinction Honor

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tage along Rts. 10 and 896 near Cochranville. He operates another farm with frontage along Baltimore Pike.

His wife, Phyllis, held up the bottom of a heavy glass bottle found alongside the road. In mid-April this year, more than 30 farmers and members of the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau helped Barlow pick up trash along some of the frontage. In 10 minutes of work, a 55-gallon container was filled with trash.

Tim Barlow has found cases of beer, emptied, lying on the fields.

Barlow knows what it costs when a tire runs over the sharp

attended the conference pieces of the shredded cans that have ended up in the feed bunk.

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

Even though the harvester is equipped with magnets that can capture iron and steel, the magnets have no effect on aluminum. The aluminum simply passes into the feed, undetected, and consumed by livestock.

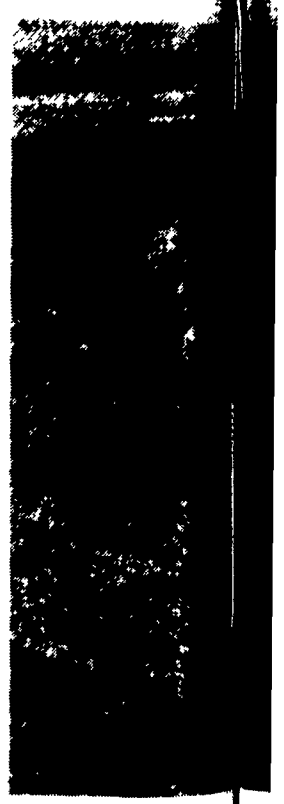
Barlow, Moyer, and Kopp all wonder: are some of the mysteri-



George Moyer, who helps manage Mor-Dale Farms in Myerstown, has spent many weekends walking along road frontage, picking up trash that could wreak havoc with his farm equipment and end up in the forage.



Tim Barlow, a dairy farmer, shows pieces of trash, including a bottle cap, found in his field. The trash is often found near the base of a bottle.



Dairyman Roland Feeg shows a fruit juice bottle cap, lying in the trash, that he is picking up while cleaning up the

**On average, Barlow estimates that two cows per year come down with some mysterious diseases that are almost impossible to pinpoint.**