



the heifer barn with five tiny, new chicks in tow. The four cream-colored and one charcoal baby peeps were just adorable. Knowing the cats would shortly be on watch, I told the guys I'd try to find and snag the little family after dark, knowing a couple of grandchildren across the meadow would be thrilled with a family of real Easter chicks.

Evening came and went, we got busy with something else, and the hatched egg hunt was forgotten. So first thing next morning, before pitching in with chores, I went searching, hoping to beat the cats to the punch. Just outside the distant end of the barn, on the ground, hunkered the hen. Three feet away, a cat waited, knowing she would begin stirring at daylight and the chicks would become vulnerable.

But, before I could inch quite close enough to snag her, that hen bolted into mid-air, screaming unbelievably loud insults at the top of her tiny lungs. One chick had died overnight; I scooped the other four into a plastic pail. The Farmer arrived to lend a hand; it took several minutes before we could coax her to the edge of the leaned-over pail, where he corralled her. Against her screaming, squawking, pecking protests, she and her family were tucked

into a cardboard box in the warm barn office, then headed home with our daughter after morning chores.

It was the grandson's "project" of the day to help set up chicken wire around an old smokehouse, shake out straw, fill a small water container and scatter finely-ground corn. The kids were enthralled with the chicks, more than making up for enduring the verbal abuse and flogging attempts from the hen all through this process.

Later in the day, to our daughter's groans, her hubby informed her that, early that morning, he'd spied a great-horned owl perched in the trees directly overhead of where she had set up the poultry pen.

Two more of the chicks died, including the little black one which lay still inside the fence

when the boys took me on a chicken tour one evening last week. But at the back of the snug pen sat the hen, carefully concealing the remaining family members beneath her petite-and currently clean and dry-feathered frame. And she was glowering at us through the fading light.

We dug a shallow hole and buried the tiny chick. Josh, age five, chose a small rock as a gravestone. Caleb, a less understanding almost-three, wanted to do "More!" Rerunning the burial of the chick seemed highly tasteless, so we diverted his attention to more upbeat pursuits.

No one has seen the owl lately.

But it no doubt figured all this fussing by humans over a couple of chickens in an absolute hoot.

A pathetic sight, it was. The beige-feathered bantam hen, hopelessly tangled in a piece of nylon netting, was filthy and wet from thrashing in the mud in a corner of the pasture. Andy and Nate, two of our after-school work team, had rescued the bedraggled hen when they switched milking herds. We quickly took a sharp scissors to the netting, then gave the hen an impromptu warm bath in a bucket.

She cursed us in chicken talk, squawking with a vengeance, attempting to inflict damage. After the dunking, I wrapped her in a towel, carried her to the far end of the barn and released her. Save for the extremely bad temper (she flung a few more unprintable chicken epithets at me as she fled), the hen seemed

none the worse for her misfortune.

Next morning I spotted her in the distance, still squawking. This time, her ire was aimed at the persistent pursuit by one of our two roosters.

Our once-abundant pasture bantam flock has dwindled to few, tough old-timers. Their efforts in the last year or so to reproduce have been repeatedly short-circuited by foxes, hawks, owls, and Mamma Cat, our professional barn-pest patroller. Since chickens are not encouraged around dairy operations, we have left nature take its course. And no more thought was given to the mad, wet hen, except for Andy's and Nate's inquiry about her a few days later.

Then, a few evenings before Easter, the hen appeared outside

## Laura England Joins ADA/DC Middle Atlantic Staff

PHILADELPHIA — Laura England has joined the American Dairy Association/Dairy Council Middle Atlantic as director of communications, it was announced recently by Chief Executive Officer Bret Rigby.

someone with Laura's communications background and commitment to the dairy industry as part of our team," Rigby said. "She will provide key leadership in developing our communications program and in working to maintain a positive public image for dairy products and the dairy industry."

In this position, England is responsible for all communication activities, including public relations, media relations, product publicity, print materials and industry relations. As a member of the senior management team, she also will assist in developing strategic and corporate goals that support both regional and national dairy promotion initiatives.

England graduated from Penn State University with a bachelor's degree in agricultural sciences. She earned a master's in business administration degree, with an emphasis in marketing, from La Salle University.

England, who grew up on a dairy farm in central Pennsylvania, has worked in communications for nearly 17 years. Prior to joining ADA/DC Middle Atlantic, she was self-employed as a communications consultant, working for Land O'Lakes and other agriculture-related clients. She previously worked in dairy cooperative communications and as an agricultural journalist. "We are pleased to have

England has served in leadership positions with numerous agriculture-related organizations, including the Pennsylvania State Council of Farm Organizations, the Cooperative Communicators Association and the Regional Infrastructure for Sustaining Agriculture (RISA). She is an active member of the Philadelphia Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America.

England and her husband, Joe, and their son, Matthew, reside in North Wales.

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