

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



They show up this time of year, every year, as regularly as icicles, wind chill factors and the flu.

"Lose weight fast!" pitches. Workout classes. Exercise videos. Hi-energy, low-cal drinks designed to replace meals, for folks in a hurry. (Who isn't?). Diet plans to "melt away" weight.

Yeah, right. Fact is, after the holiday glutony of cookies, cakes, pies, stuffing, gravy — and yes, chocolate for some of us — plus confinement indoors by "wintry-mix weather," many of us have at least a couple unwanted pounds hanging somewhere between our ribcage and our knees. And it's about as unwelcome as the tax forms that arrived concurrently.

Not to be outdone, we are offering you — if you sign up immediately — our special introductory rate on our own innovative, post-holiday, winter-couch-potato, weight-loss program.

Farm Fitness and Firm-Up. Our program starts the way we start every day here: in the dairy barn. With a warmup exercise of pushing the milker cart, loaded with two five-gallon buckets of hot water and eight milking machines. Hang tight to it as you guide it down the sloped walkway, hang a 90-degree right turn, and march that load down the 200-feet of sawdusted center alleyway to the far end of the rows of stalls.

Puffing a little there, are you?

Just step outside into that 15-degree, 4:30 a.m. air while you take a moment's breather and enjoy the stars twinkling in the black sky overhead.

Now, take that dipper filled with pre-dip sanitizing solution, a couple of paper towels, bend at the waist, stretch your arms in under that udder, dip, massage, dip again, dry those four teats completely. Step to the cart, lift the milker, which weighs several pounds, hang it on the overhead line, plug in the vacuum line and the milk line. Bend down again, reach in under that udder and attach the machines. Repeat with the next cow. As each milker finishes, do all that in reverse, bend back down and dip those teats in a post-milking, anti-bacterial iodine solution.

Repeat for the next four hours, working from one end of the barn to the other, then back for the second group of girls. When completed, push that load — minus the buckets of water — back the length of the alleyway, up the slope and into the milkhouse. Hose it all off, hang up the milkers to wash, and hose down the entire milkhouse, including milk tank.

No, no, no, you can't go lie down yet.

Now, pick up those two five-gallon buckets of calf milk and carry it up the slope — yes, that ice-covered one — to the calf pens. Fill bottles of milk, distribute to calves. Dump buckets of water and refill with fresh. Bend over at waist into feed bin, scooping out calf grain, then distribute to calves. Re-gather bottles, bending from waist to retrieve all those butted on the floor by eager calves, wash and return to drying-rack. Carry bales of hay and straw from heifer barn. Bed calves and feed hay.

No, no, no, you can't go lie down yet.

Clean feed troughs in heifer pens. Scoop and distribute a dozen several-pound scoops of heifer feed. Scoot up ice-covered slope to storage. Scale your way up the side of the cliff-like stack of stored straw bales. Throw down a half-dozen bales of straw and drop to pens below. Climb into hay mow. Throw down a half-dozen bales and drop into

alleyway below. Slide back down ice-covered slope with a 50-pound bag of calf feed. Dump calf feed into storage bin.

Break up straw bales and distribute around pens, shaking and scattering. Stack hay bales and distribute a portion of them among the troughs.

Return to dairy barn. Clean out box stalls and bed with fresh sawdust. Shovel out leftover feed and give to heifers. Sweep feed trough areas. Put down fresh silage. Put down fresh sawdust. Sweep alleyways. Return cows to barn.

Break? What break? It's lunchtime. And won't that "melt away the pounds" can of drinkable meal replacement taste delicious before you go rest up for the next session of Farm Fitness and Firm-Up?

Which will begin in just a few hours.

Don't be late.

Recordkeeping Simplified

It's the beginning of a new year and a good chance to get your financial records organized. If you start now, tax time for 2001 will be much easier.

Use the following guidelines to help you determine which financial records to keep and which ones to toss.

Keep:

- Year-end stock and mutual funds earnings.
- Canceled checks and bank statements for at least three years.
- Receipts for tax-deductible

expenses and charitable donations.

• Receipts for home improvements, even if you will not gain over \$250,000. Tax laws could change, plus records might be helpful to future homebuyers.

Toss:

- Receipts for purchases after warranties have expired.
- ATM and bank deposits receipts after transactions are verified on a bank statement.
- All but the most current prospectus for investments.

Source: "Loose Change"

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