

On Being a Farm Wife

(and other hazards)

Joyce Bupp



Ahh, they look so peaceful lying there.

At rest. Asleep. Curled up, contentedly dreaming.

No, no, not little kids. Cows.

As dawn lightens the early morning darkness, and a blush of pink washes across the eastern sky, they become visible out in the pasture. Dots of black and white, lounging on the soft green grass, blissfully enjoying the morning's peacefulness.

And then — like all kids at times — they wake up and turn into holy terrors.

Well, sometimes anyway.

Most of the time, cows embody that image we celebrate in June, traditional Dairy Month. Contented bovines, lounging around, endlessly chewing their cud, the work of these benevolent milk-makers provides us with tasty and nutritious foodstuffs. Cows have great press, their image so "country" and wholesome that savvy marketers use cowhide spots to market everything from cheese to computers to wind-chimes.

If you believe all that peaceful, benevolent, bovine hype, you've probably never had to chase them at 2 a.m. after a thunderstorm downpour through tall, standing corn.

Make no mistake, if you work with cows in such a way that you have daily contact with them, you generally develop somewhat of an emotional tie with them. But, in a mental state akin to that of a mom stretched to the limit by mischievous, squabbly kids, there are days when I'd help load every one on the first truck to come down the road and back up to the barn.

Like one recent morning when I walked in under our old bank barn to feed the pen of heifers there, and nearly fell over my alleyway-cleanup rake. A few more steps revealed shovels and a pitchfork strewn on the floor like pickup sticks. Hay bales were knocked around and broken ones scattered across the floor. Predictably, the inevitable, tell-tale, organic "cow-calling-card" was liberally scattered among the litter.

Though no four-legged culprit was in sight, it was easy to piece together the plot. Some bred heifer or dry cow had found a loose spot in a fence or a gate not latched tight. Escapees inevitably end up at the calf nursery area, where buckets at each individual calf pen hold snacks of sweet calf feed. And from there, the door to the under-barn heifer pen had been a wide-open invitation.

It's not supposed to be. During cold and windy weather, the heavy, sliding metal door over the entrance is kept closed (except when someone forgets). Last summer, a small, door-sized gate turned up that was perfect for setting up across the doorway, allowing access by fresh air but not "varmits." The handy little gate

vanished over the winter — and is temporarily being replaced by a wheelbarrow parked across the doorway.

Except when one of us forgets to put it back after feeding.

Our midnight prowlers not only make a mess under the barn, they sometimes make a side trip through the calf nursery, scattering more feed, more tools, more "calling cards," even occasionally dumping a bucket of milk left for the calves' breakfast bottles.

Fact is, if it can be chewed on, knocked over, butted against, pushed aside, rubbed into, kicked around, chewed up or licked at, some mischievous cow or manners-challenged heifer will find it. And if she can trash the total surroundings in the process, that bovine will be one happy camper.

In all fairness, most of our "girls" are relatively well-behaved, staying where they belong, respecting fences and gates, and just seemingly very contented cows, their needs all met by us servant humans. And even the most holy-terror-type heifers usually settle down once they join the milking string to become contributing, worthwhile, cow citizens.

So, as you gaze at herds of cows dotting area pastures, peacefully grazing in lush June grass, working daily that we might all enjoy our milk, butter, cheese, and ice cream with strawberries, look carefully to spot the inevitable troublemaker off in a corner, sniffing out an escape.

She's probably a cousin to some of ours.



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Benefit Horse Show June 30 At Mason-Dixon Fairgrounds

DELTA (York Co.) — Plans are under way for the second annual Mason-Dixon Benefit Horse Show Sunday, June 30.

The show will begin at 8:30 a.m. (rain/shine) and all breeds are welcome. Entry fees will be \$8 per class and proper show attire is required, as well as negative coggins.

There are 53 classes to include: halter, showmanship, English,

Western and speed. The divisions are broken down as follows: lead-line, walk-jog, beginner youth, youth, novice adult and adult.

In addition to the grand and reserve trophies given in the halter class, a high point trophy will be awarded for each division.

Premiums will be paid in every class on the day of the show. In addition each class winner will receive a very special award. This event is APHA PAC approved.

This event will take place at the Mason-Dixon Fairgrounds on Route 74 and Route 165 in Delta, behind Allfirst Bank. The Delta-Cardiff Volunteer Fire Company will again be selling food and beverages. All proceeds will benefit the 2002 Mason-Dixon Fair.

For more information, call Slaveview Farm, Debbie Ohl at (717) 456-7202 or e-mail at spike@nfdc.net.

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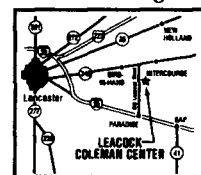
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