

On Being a Farm Wife

(and other hazards)

Joyce Bupp



A corduroy carpet has rolled out across our gently sloping hillside.

Jagged rows of beige stripes accent the new green, cornstalk residual weaving faint row markings through the grassy cover. The forage harvester's motor was till warm from chopping the corn for silage when The Farmer sent a tractor and drill poking oats seed across the hill into the denuded soil.

His goal is to have all fields cover-cropped through the winter, to minimize erosion and boost organic matter to fatten our valuable, hardworking earthworms. In a burst of lucky timing, the drill made its last passes just as another moisture-maker storm was showing its first dark clouds our way.

With Way Nature so promptly hoisting her sprinkling

can over the seeding, green shots popped through the ground about as quickly as the sun popped over the horizon in a few days. Tiny lines of green soon wound around the hill, pushing out side shoots of tender, grassy blades to fill in between the rows.

And all the neighborhood critters began showing up to feast.

A small family of resident deer hung out all summer in the alfalfa and cornfields. While the corn was standing, it offered ample cover for hiding in between their alfalfa-munching sessions. One the tall stalks were chopped, though, the does and their fawns headed for the woods. The tender, tasty oats tempted them out of hiding and gave us much closer glimpses of this year's families.

Of course, the usual parade of groundhogs, rabbits and squirrels, dwellers of the fencerows

and the woodlot, nabbed the opportunity to dine on fresh feastings as well. Then the aerial troops began to flock in.

This invitation began small, just a few of our matured Canada goose hatchlings returning for a visit. After learning to fly, they had disappeared to join larger area flocks. New oaks growth brought more than our few winging back, apparently they invited every distant relative anywhere nearby to join the party.

Their timing was fascinating, since the invasion of literally several hundred feathered friends descended on the field of freshly sprouted oats about two days after the early goose-hunting season closed. It's probably safe to assume that the couple of acres they dined on from sunrise to sunset is probably even better fertilized than neighboring parts of that field. Feed for fertilizer was probably a reasonable trade.

Seeding a cover crop in the fields by the house has a dual purpose, not only to protect and enrich the soil, but also to provide our "girls" with healthy fall grazing. Last year's drought and short crops left us seriously short of quality feed through the summer. So, as quickly as the weather permitted, temporary fence went up, and we swung open the gates.

Turning cows out into the pasture for the first time each season

is a heart-warming sight. But it's best to watch from a distance. Our older cows seem to remember field-pasturing from year to year. They'll practically stampede right over you for the fresh grass.

The first several minutes of this exercise are never about eating. Instead, the whole group will run, trot, kick up their heels - as they race toward the top of the hill. Heads in the air, tails trailing behind, udders of the older ones swaying as they run, their behavior suggests kindergartners excused to the playground. With acres of edible-playground to choose from, they split off in clusters, heading for various corners to explore.

Eventually, after getting the recess mode out of their systems, the girls settle down to business.

Heads get buried in the grass, muzzles busy munching. Black and white cows grazing on green grass with a blue sky overhead is absolutely one of my favorite scenes.

Their presence wasn't quite as thrilling to another group.

A day or two after we began grazing the hillside, several flocks of geese, flew over one morning, honking loudly. Headed north? Minutes later, several flocks of geese flew over, headed south. Honking even more loudly. Then we realized it was our feathered moochers, highly upset over losing their feeding area to the new "flock" that was munching their grass. And they haven't been back.

Maybe we've stumbled on a solution to all those public areas troubled with nuisance geese. Get cows.

Dolls, Toys And Collectables Show Set For Nov. 2 At York Fairgrounds

YORK (York Co.) — More than 200 dealers and collectors will be bringing some of their finest dolls, toys, teddy bears, Beanie babies, Barbies and Star Wars collectables to the York 35th Semi-Annual Show and Sale, Sunday, Nov. 2, at the Old Main Building in the York Fairgrounds, Route 74 South off Route 30.

The show will feature exhibitors from approximately 15 states from Canada to Florida.

Admission charge is \$4.00 or \$3.50 with this news article or newspaper coupon. Children under 14 years of age are free when with a parent.

Show hours are Sunday, Nov. 2, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.. There will be an early bird admission at 9 a.m. for \$10 for those who want to beat the crowds. Door prizes will be given away.

For information contact Ron Funk at (717) 442-4279.

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