

## On Being a Farm Wife

(and other hazards)

Joyce Bupp



What we need is a good, long, snowy winter.

No, wait. Before you start calling me nasty names, please read on.

Consider the economic kick-in-the-pants lent by a good, old-fashioned snowfall. Snow gives a dynamite boost to our national spending. With a foot plus of the white stuff already under our belts for the season, combined with the shopping frenzy season, the resulting generation of dollars spent should send the financial markets skyrocketing.

Signs of recovery from our stagnant economy have been stirring around for awhile. A long, snowy winter would stoke up the fuels of spending fire to build a head of steam under the creeping economy and send it down the track a'smokin'.

If you doubt for a minute the economic effectiveness of snow, consider this single commodity. Salt. The Farmer was in a hardware/building supplies store a day prior to last week's dumping of white stuff. He came home commenting on how the shelves were totally barren of that simple basic material.

Gone were the bags of sidewalk melting salt. Gone were the bags of anything faintly related to a salt product. Check out your local supermarket during a stretch of winter weather stuff, and the pickling salt, the kosher salt, the ice-cream making salt will all be gone. We assume that gritty cat litter probably also saw a sales spike.

Remember the salt shortage that struck the East Coast during a particularly intense stretch of weeks of cold, ice, and snow a couple of years ago? Even the shelf spots that are always stocked full of those standard one-pound cylinders of table salt we buy at the supermarket held nothing but empty space.

The Farmer notes that a skid of feed-ingredient salt was ordered shortly before the onset of Arctic-imitation weather, more as it turns out than we will likely need for some time. I can smell a marketing opportunity here.

Consider other spending spikes spurred by impending snowstorms. There's the inevitable rush for milk (buy extra gallons!), bread, potato chips, and toilet paper (we don't want to run out of that, do we?), and rentals of videos.

Even ice cream sales zip up when snow is imminent. That was always a puzzle to me. But, hey it's dairy, so treat yourself to an extra big dishful when you come in from shoveling and sledging.

Snow tire sales get a major boost when the first flakes start to float. So do ice scrapers, shovels, snow blowers, and no doubt, snow-moving equipment for use with lawn/garden machines. And cabs to put over them, so the operator can stay dry and snug.

My dad spent most of his working career in the shipping department of a local chain man-

ufacturer. Blizzards, both local and distant, generated lots of overtime for him as the firm packaged and shipped tire chains 24/7. Tire chains have faltered seriously as a snow economy boost in this era of front-wheel drives and SUVs, at least in part of the country.

An entire tourist industry would fall apart — we're talking billions of bucks — without snow, natural and manmade. To say nothing of ski and snowboard gear, lift-equipment maintenance, slope grooming, hotels and lodges, food establishments, medical centers, ambulance services, crutch rentals ... well, enough of that one.

What about the body-shop industry, which sees backups of weeks for repair work after major, lengthy, white-weather "events"? Windshield repair folks also get a boost from cracked glass resulting from connecting with ice flying off vehicles on the highway and gravel tossed up from icy-road applications.

While not measurable on a financial chart, snow has always been viewed as a beneficial boost to farmland. It blankets and shelters the soil, mulches valuable plantings like alfalfa and fall-seeded grain crops, and carries moisture into the subsoil. And that benefits everyone who uses water and like to eat regularly.

Goodness gracious, with all these positive benefits of snow, shouldn't we all have "blizzard" at the top of our Christmas lists? Santa would be especially appreciative.

And, look what *he* does for the economy.

## Extension Offers Courses

BEDFORD (Bedford Co.) — Penn State Cooperative Extension in Bedford, Fulton, and York counties will be offering three Extension Home Study Courses this winter, beginning Feb. 4. The purpose of the courses is to teach producers about production principles for beef, sheep, or meat goats.

All three courses are available through the postal service and the sheep and meat goat courses are available through e-mail/internet. Each course has six lessons that are to be completed weekly. The lesson topics include basic production information, nutrition, health, reproduction, marketing, and financial issues.

Each lesson has information about the topic and a worksheet for producers to complete and mail or e-mail back to the extension office for comments. Producers can also submit any questions that they would like answered.

Melanie Arkley, Bedford County extension agent, said "Each course is a great way for producers to learn new information without having to rearrange their schedule to accommodate a meeting. Producers can study the lessons at their leisure in their own home." The worksheet questions are designed to ask producers about their current operation so that they can have comments from the instructor to help them improve their management skills.

For more information you can contact the Penn State Cooperative Extension Office in Bedford County at (814) 623-4800 or in Fulton County at (717) 485-4111. Cost for the course is \$15 if taking over e-mail/internet (sheep and meat goat courses only) and \$25 if taking through the postal service. Deadline for registration is Jan. 29.

## New Jersey Sponsors Farm Show Bus

HUNTERDON, N.J. — The Hunterdon County Board of Agriculture will be hosting a bus trip to the Farm Show in Harrisburg on Tuesday, Jan. 13.

The ticket cost is \$20 per person payable in advance. There will be three pick-up locations; 7 a.m. at the Extension Center on Route 31, Flemington, 7:20 a.m. at the Clinton Library, and 7:40 a.m. at the former Laneco parking lot on Rt. 22, behind the Clar-

ion Inn near Phillipsburg. The group will be staying to see the Horse Pulling Contest in the large arena.

To register, send your payment to Hunterdon County Board of Agriculture, P.O. Box 2327, Flemington, NJ 08822 or stop at the Extension Office on Route 31, Flemington.

If you have any questions, call (908) 788-1339.

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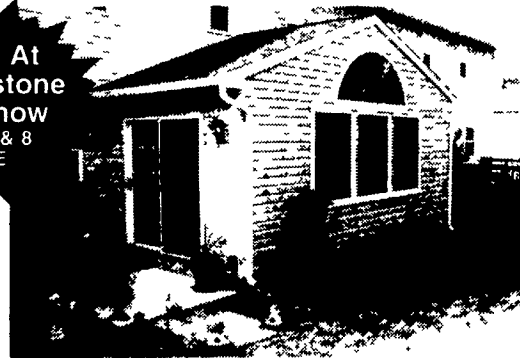
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