

OUR VIEW

When good farm partners turn bad

IT'S the Murphy's Law of farming. The farm boss (husband) takes off for a week of meetings and livestock marketing. You (wife/partner) dutifully stay behind, shouldering all the chores and management decisions. If anything can go wrong, it will.

While driving him to the airport you offer reassurance. "Everything will be fine, sweetie." (It's wishful thinking.)

And just when you think you've made it through the first couple of days with flying colors, the next day dawns and the what-can-go-wrong-now events begin.

On Sunday, the hinge on the front pasture gate breaks and the feed bin is clogged. No big deal; you can handle that.

On Monday, the prize show gilt drops dead of unknown causes. (Why me?!)

To escape the searing heat on Tuesday, a cow wades into the pond and gets stuck. Two exhausting hours later, with the help of a tractor and two nephews, the cow is back safely on dry ground, but you are covered head to toe with mud. You finish chores at 11 p.m.

On Wednesday, you move the cows to a new pasture without a pond. That evening, you discover the float valve on the automatic waterer in the pasture is stuck and is creating a big mud hole (much to the cows' delight).

Thursday you get a breather; but Friday is freaky and a ram lamb develops a kidney stone. By sunset, it's dead (as well as any chance of forgiveness).

The events above all happened to me during one long, hot July week. Some days we're Flo from the cartoon "Stampede"; some days we're "super farmer." No doubt, farm life tests our mettle. We are often reminded that we cannot control nature or beasts. Most of all, we are reminded to work smarter.

Next year, I'm going along on my husband's vacation and we're hiring some poor, naive soul to mind the farm.

Murphy's Law of editing

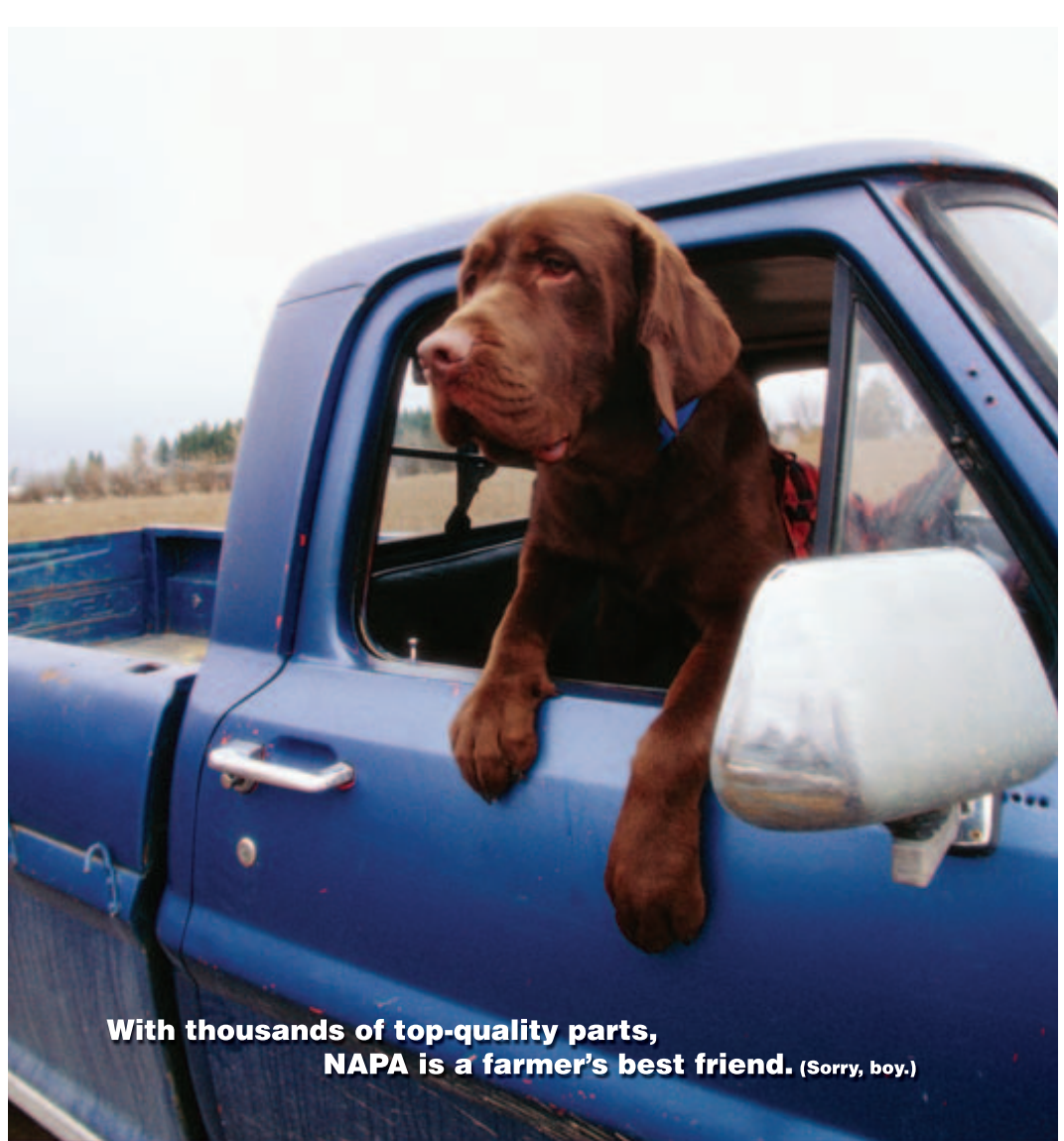
Once in awhile an editor slips up. In my August editorial, "Missouri's soil savior is 20 years old," I credited the Conservation Reserve Program and conservation-tillage practices for turning around our state's soil erosion losses. A reader thanked me, then pointed out

an oversight. I failed to give due credit to the Missouri Parks and Soils Tax and the original committee of farmers, agribusiness people and conservationists who made it happen back in 1984.

On Aug. 8, Missouri voters supported this one-tenth-cent sales tax once again

with 70.8% in favor of Amendment 1. Half of the tax revenues are earmarked to conserving our state's soil and water resources. It makes it possible for the 75% cost share to build terraces and waterways to keep soil intact and cropland productive.

We've cut our soil erosion rates in half over the past 22 years. Still, some 3.7 million acres are eroding above tolerable levels. The taxpayer citizens of Missouri have made a commitment to soil and water conservation. Let's show them what we can accomplish.



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