

Taking sink-or-swim lessons



For Starters
By JOSH FLINT

GROWING up, my family and I used to enjoy weekends on the water at Lake of the Ozarks in mid-Missouri. It was here that I learned the skill of swimming.

All summer, my father had patiently taught me how to swim. We were fortunate enough to have a swimming pool in our backyard, so the lessons were fairly relaxed and low pressure. I was coming along nicely, but I still enjoyed the security of having Dad next to me as I treaded water.

Share your view

Prairie Farmer welcomes opinions and comments on issues that relate to your farm business. Send an e-mail to Associate Editor Josh Flint at jflint@farmprogress.com, or write to us at *Prairie Farmer* Letters, 1301 E. Mound Road, Decatur, IL 62526. Include your name, address and phone number for verification purposes. Please limit comments to 300 words or less.

On a particular hot weekend that summer, Mom, Dad, my sister and I went up to the lake for some boating and family time. By now, I was treading water in the 8-foot section of the pool quite comfortably. However, I still wasn't ready to tackle the lake; something about not being able to see your feet was a little scary.

As we all made our way down to the boat dock, Dad asked if I was ready to try swimming in the lake. I stammered around and finally said no. After our boat was loaded with sodas, snacks and all of our life jackets, Dad motioned for me to come to the edge of the dock, he wanted to show me something. (That should have been a red flag.) With that, he picked me up and heaved me into the water.

At that moment, I was probably the most scared I'd ever been in my young life. I kicked and thrashed violently. Gradually, the natural motion of treading water in the swimming pool began to come to me. After about 30 seconds, I realized I was swimming, toward the dock, much to my relief.

When I climbed onto the dock, I was absolutely furious at what my father had done. I couldn't believe he would do such a thing. Slowly, it dawned on me. I swam in the Lake of the Ozarks. My anger subsided and a feeling of accomplishment and invincibility began

to build. Dad saw it on my face, and he smiled and hugged me.

Later that day, I asked him, "What if I had sunk?"

He told me he would have dove in after me, and he wouldn't have come up until he had me in his arms. Plus, the water was only about 5 feet deep, he added.

Student becomes the teacher

About a month ago, I was painting our baby's room. He/she is due Dec. 1. As I painted, I reflected on the lesson my dad taught me all those years ago. It was literally a sink-or-swim lesson.

Now the shoe will be on the other foot. As a kid, I wondered how my dad could do such a thing. As a soon-to-be father, I hope I have the courage to teach my son or daughter the valuable sink-or-swim lessons.

These lessons come in all shapes and sizes. I remember helping Dad at work when I was a boy. We were changing oil on semi trucks. When the job was done, he placed his greasy wrenches in a pan of gasoline to soak. Before he went to lube the truck's grease fittings, he asked me to put away the gas can.

Being only 8 or 9, the concept of how a spout fits back into a gas can was a

Please take our call

EVERY year we try to make contact with a large number of our readers to catch up on their businesses. This annual summer survey is more in-depth than most, but it is an opportunity for us to get to know more about your business so we can serve you better. Please talk with our survey folks when they call, and thanks for your help.



little complex. I immediately called for his help. He said he was busy, figure it out on my own. It took about 15 minutes, but I got it done. My temper probably added at least 10 minutes to the job.

Thanks, Dad(s)

I hope all of the fathers out there had a great Father's Day. I want to thank my dad for teaching me all of life's hard lessons. I also want to thank the other fathers for teaching their sons. If dads didn't do their jobs, there would be a lot of broken cars and tractors.

I'm sure your father has taught you a lesson like the ones my dad taught me. Or, maybe you're the dad teaching your son or daughter a life-changing lesson. Please tell us the story.

Letters

Studies say rBGH not safe

Mr. Bechman's editorial (May 2008 issue) "More at stake than a bovine hormone" was rather interesting. I too applaud this dairyman's moral values for signing the agreement and following through with it.

First of all, I would like to point out that a cow makes the appropriate amount of growth hormone for the stage of life she is at naturally. She does not need more artificial growth hormone.

In your editorial, you reference Terry Etherton who claims, "The battle is not about food safety. The FDA said milk from cows treated with this product was safe more than 10 years ago."

Sir, I beg to differ with this opinion. Milk from cows treated with rBGH has higher levels of the hormone insulin-like growth factor 1 (IGF 1) than untreated cows. In studies by Harvard, Lancet and the International Journal of Cancer, IGF-1 has been linked to breast, prostate, colon and other types of cancer.

"IGF-1 also inhibits the ability of various anti-cancer drugs to kill cultured human breast cancer cells."

Cows treated with rBGH have higher rates of mastitis and somatic cell counts in their milk. This condition requires more antibiotics and has high culling rates. Milk from antibiotic treated cows cannot be sold. These actions increase the dairyman's operating costs.

In Canada, scientists testifying before their Senate on rBGH reported that they had been pressured to approve the drug, that documents had been stolen from locked file cabinets and that Monsanto tried to bribe them with "\$1 million to \$2 million to approve

the drug without further study."

The above information is drawn from the book "Genetic Roulette: The Documented Health Risks of Genetically Engineered Foods" by Jeffrey Smith, 2007, Yes books, Fairfield, Iowa. All quotes are directly from the book.

In conclusion, I would say the only real loser here is Monsanto. The dairy farmers are better off by not spending money for Posilac, not having to buy as much antibiotics since there is less mastitis, and not having to dump the milk from so many cows being treated for mastitis.

The overall best solution for healthy cows, and healthy milk is rotationally grazing cows on well-managed pasture (i.e., green grass in the growing season and stockpiled forage as long into the winter as the supply lasts).

Before retiring and moving to my farm, I was a self-employed plumber for many years. There was a small magnetic sign on the file cabinet in my office that reminded me the two most important rules in business are:

1. The customer is always right!
2. When the customer is wrong, refer back to rule #1!

Today we lack direct farmer-to-consumer contact, and it is working to the detriment of the farmer. Where farmers and consumers get together — at farmers markets, on farm sales, pick your own operations, etc. — farmers know what customers want and customers connect a name and a face with the food they are buying.

Thank you for your attention to my concerns.

Robert Sayre
Dundas

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