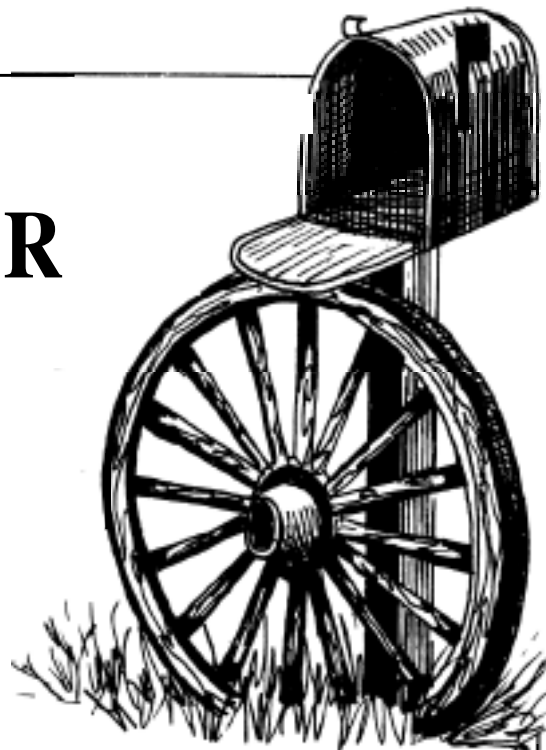


# THE COUNTRY COUSIN

*When Flora Poling writes a "Country Cousin" letter, she's basing its contents on first-hand experience. A grandmother of 10, she's spent her entire 61 years down on the farm. she was born, raised and still lives near Raymond, Ohio, where she and her husband Verl have been in the registered Angus business for a number of years.*



Dear Cousin,

Spring will soon be here, and we must be prepared to emerge with joy, and be in prime condition. At least so all the health-spa come-ons say. I listen to all this surge of aerobic dancing, jazzercise, and health spa exercise and want to say, "Hey, come go a few days with me." There's kick, 2, 3, 4; heave, 2, 3, 4; hoist, 2, 3, 4; in order to get the frozen gate loose and through a snow drift so the bale tractor can get through. Then comes chop, 2, 3, 4; dip, 2, 3, 4; lift, 2, 3, 4; pour, 2, 3, 4 to break the ice in the water tank and fill the carrying buckets for the mothers in the maternity wards. And sometimes it's plop, 2, 3, 4 damn, 2, 3, 4 brush, 2, 3, 4; when you hit a patch of ice covered with snow and your feet go forward together instead of the usual one at a time.

And isometrics! There's no planned exercise to match how the muscles constrict when you are driving the pickup, bucking the snow drifts through a sea of cows, while the boss is shoveling corn out of the back and struggling to keep from being thrown overboard in the "Black C". There's no parallel to the curl you can get in your toes and leg muscles when carrying hay bales or water buckets full of feed to the wards when those free in the lot are intent on hijacking your burden. The lot being covered with slop and ice underneath hinders the value of your karate kick, and heightens the chance that you will sit down and dent your bucket.

The opportunities for jogging are numerous-you jog for the tool box, jog for the water jug, jog to the mail box, and the sprint you put on to beat the "Texas Chorus" to an open gate qualifies you for any marathon. There's never any question about the winner!

Now, of course, about all you lose is your temper, your patience, your balance, and your mind, none of which show much loss on the bathroom scale. Your only consolation is that your love thinks a cow is beautiful, so Gloria Marshall-eat your heart out!

As always,

The Country Cousin  
Flora S. Poling