



## **Family, Friends, Faith, and Farming: the good "F" words.** *by Roddy Dull*

---

Well, here we are in 2014. I hope that all of you had a fantastic Christmas and New Years. My "F" word for January is "Feeding". Here's a farm word that you will never get away from. I want to give you a little ride down memory lane with this month's story. Feeding was an all manual task in my childhood days. Winter feeding started like this: We would climb the shoot of the 30 foot silo, chisel our way down through some snow, and start to shovel down corn silage with a good old silage fork as they were known back then. Once you had a good pile below, you would climb back out of the silo door and climb back down. Now it was time to shovel again into an old wash tub and then we would carry that tub down the feed alley in front of the cows and shake out even portions to each cow. Once the silage was fed we would go to the other end of the feed alley and get a scoop of ground feed to add over the top of the silage to complete the meal. The ground feed wasn't the same scientifically complete balanced ration that it is today, but instead it was a combination of ground ear corn, oats, and some sweet smelling molasses. It made milk just like today's rations, though and the cows loved it. Now it was time to milk. Once the milking was done, there were all of the other animals to feed. When I say all, I mean all. We would always pour a little milk in a pan in the walkway and the cats would come out of the woodwork. I only saw a cat or two occasionally other than chore time, but when that milk hit the pan they would come a running and the dog, too. Now it was time to feed calves. In those days they were all in pens in the same barn. Some got milk and some got milk replacer. Some got the bottle, some got a nipple pail, and some just stuck their heads all of the way in the bucket and drank til dry. After the calves, cats, dog, and a couple of horses were fed, it was time to through down hay. In the earliest days, the hay bales were small rounds. I'm sure some of you have never seen one. They were about 4 feet long and 18 to 20 inches in diameter. In order to handle them, you needed at least one hay hook that had a sharp point on one end and a round handle on the other. You would hold the hook tight in your hand and then swing it hard like a hammer to sink the sharp end deep into the hay so you could easily move it around. Once we had one bale for every two cows spread out in the feed alley, we would have to split the bales. The way we split the bales was with a regular wood axe. We would split the bales from one end to the other down to the core. Once we reached the core, the bales opened up in layers and we would pull the layers out and place the hay in front of the cows.

Wow! No augers, no unloaders, no feed carts. Just your hands, a few man powered tools that fit in your hands, and a lot of ambition. There was a personal touch to feeding in those days that will never return. I know that it has to be that way as farming successfully grows in our world, but I am glad that I had the opportunity to experience the old way. The old way brought you close to each and every animal that had learned to rely on you to take care of them each and every day in almost the same way that children rely on moms and dads when they are little.

This relationship was never more evident than in a Christmas Eve tradition that my Grandpa started many years ago. After Christmas Eve Supper when all of the family had packed up their gifts, plates full of leftovers, and many sleeping grandchildren to return to their own homes to await the coming of Santa, Grandpa would make one more trip back to the barn. Why? He made sure that each and every animal that he routinely cared for twice a day, seven days a week, received an extra ration of feed on that very special one night of the year. I loved and respected this man dearly before I ever heard this story. Words will never truly express my feelings about this wonderful man now. May this feeding story help you have a greater respect and appreciation for all life as we start this New Year 2014.

*Roddy Dull*