

## We need to be prepared for agricultural emergency

American stockmen and U.S. officials have been watching as Europe tears apart its livestock industry in a failing attempt to stop the spread of hoof-and-mouth disease.

It is a frightening prospect, but some experts say odds are better than even that the infection will spread to the U.S.

While so far it has been confined to Europe, it has spread to the continent from Britain despite strict quarantine regulations.

While there are vaccines which could prevent the disease, they present a dilemma to the livestock industry. Tests used to screen animals moving to market or for breeding cannot distinguish between animals which are infected, and must be destroyed, and those which have been vaccinated, but are healthy.

As a result, most countries ban use of the vaccine. It is expensive and in short supply, anyway, and it's likely that manufacturers could not produce enough to stop the spread of the epidemic.

What will we do when the disease hits our shores?

It's likely, that as in Europe, our livestock industry will be widely disrupted by quarantines and destruction of thousands of head of infected or suspicious stock. Livestock operators could face

being unable to move animals to market — and even the complete destruction of their herds.

While the federal government has an overall plan to handle an epidemic should one break out here, only about half the states have a plan according to published reports. Officials in those which don't have a plan will have some fast thinking to do.

While quarantine regulations are supposed to stop livestock diseases from entering this country, foot-and-mouth disease spreads so quickly and easily that an innocent traveler could bring it home from Europe without knowing. Foot baths and the like set up at foreign airports may or may not help prevent this kind of spread.

We need to be ready. If the disease does not make it here this time, it will the next. Or some other dread livestock virus, maybe one yet unknown, will appear here. We could even be the victim of a biological terrorist attack.

Whatever the cause, an outbreak could ruin the livestock business, and the packing house and food business, in this country for years. Unchecked, such an event could produce both high food prices and even a depression. It's no minor matter.

We just cannot afford to drift along. We have to be ready.

— Steve Haynes

## Mother-in-law was a rare jewel

The call we had been waiting for, and dreading, came Friday. And we still weren't quite prepared for it.

Jim's mom, Margie, had died after a long and valiant battle with a form of leukemia, compounded by heart disease.

No one was ever more ready to go than Margie. Always the planner, she had made all her funeral arrangements, eliminating any conflict over making decisions. Always the caretaker, she did the last thing she possibly could for her family.

I have only known Margie for a little over six years. Our honeymoon trip included a few days with Margie and Sid in Montana, where she warmly welcomed me into the family. If Jim loved me, then she did too. No question asked, just total acceptance.

Professionally, Margie was a teacher. Many of her former students have contacted me and each one said that she made learning fun. The last 11 years of her career found Margie assigned to special education students. There, she found her calling.

The attention some of these kids needed was her specialty. A few years ago, we met one of them. He told us how he hadn't been able to read and had hated school. He said to Jim, "Your mother worked and worked with me. I



### Out Back

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caught up with my classmates and graduated from high school. Now, I own my own business and am doing just fine. All because Mrs. Simonsen took the time and cared."

She was, by all accounts, a hard worker: gardening, canning, cleaning, cooking, farming and ranching. You had to hustle to keep up with Margie. We always teased her about the plenitude of home canned produce, jams and jellies in her basement by saying, "In case of famine, this is where we want to be."

I've heard the stories from Jim, his brother and sister about how, as children, they would test her to (and beyond) her limits.

After one particularly trying day with three "hyped-up" kids underfoot she cried out in frustration, "You kids are just like a bunch of tions and ligers!" The kids caught her slip instantly and

when she realized what she had said, they all broke down in laughter. Discipline, yes, but there was laughter too. Always laughter.

Margie was a prolific letter writer. A week seldom went by but what we didn't receive a big, fat envelope stuffed with several pages of news from her and Sidney's life on the ranch, plus cartoons, columns and articles she thought we would find interesting.

Then there was her music. Margie loved to play the piano and guitar (teaching every student she ever had to play at least three chords) and just a few years ago mastered a rather complicated electronic keyboard. Her children all have some of her musical talent and she was their best audience, always professing their superb, stupendous and magnificent talents.

Last night, Jim and I were talking about our mothers' similarities. We agreed. They were not "wimpy" women.

So, even though we'll miss her now, I'll repeat Jim's parting words to his mom: "This isn't good-bye," he said. "We'll see you later".

### From the Bible

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. Hebrews 13: 5-6.

Kansas' \$185 million projected revenue shortfall has the Legislature leaving no stone unturned...



## Alfalfa brings back bunny memories

I thought of Bunsky the other day while watching some kids fly their kites.

It wasn't the children or the kites that made me think of the white rabbit that entered our lives almost as if he had hopped out of Lewis Carroll tale.

It was the alfalfa. The children had gotten permission to fly their kites in a field of fresh spring alfalfa — bunny food, we still call it around our house.

We were living the Monte Vista, Colo., across the street from a family of Mexican nationals. They were nice folks, but except for the oldest boy, who led my daughter's class in high school, I couldn't understand a word they said. The problem was mutual.

They spoke Spanish and I spoke English. We communicated with a friendly wave on our way to work and school each day.

One summer day, I returned home at dusk to what appeared, seen in the twilight, to be plastic trash bags hopping all over the neighbors' lawn. Closer inspection showed that there had been a major bunny break.

They raised rabbits, you see. It took several hours and a lot of running around by both families to herd the rabbits back to where they belonged.

Rabbits are fast and sneaky. They double back between your legs as you



### Open Season

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grab for them. It was an exciting evening, but we thought we had rounded up all the stray hoppers.

Except for one. Youngest daughter found a tiny, bundle of fuzz in the back of our shed. She took it across the street but the neighbors refused to accept the errant rabbit, handing it back with a smile and a wave of their hands.

That's how Bunsky came to live with us. He came to be a very old rabbit, moving to Kansas and living in Oberlin for several years.

Back when he was younger, he would recall his youth and skip out on us occasionally. We would usually find him nibbling the fresh green alfalfa in the field behind our house.

I say he when I refer to Bunsky. We never did determine whether our pet was male or female, but since a young rabbit's fancy turned to bunny breaks each spring, and we never had more

than one rabbit appear in the cage after these interludes, I came to the conclusion that Bunsky was a boy.

I tried to determine what he was when he was young — just like my Daddy taught me.

Daddy always said that he determined whether our kittens were boys or girls by checking the bottoms of their feet. He dutifully turned each pet over and inspected their bottoms and delivered a verdict.

He was right almost half the time. All I saw on Bunsky when I turned him over was white fur. White fur on his paws, white fur on his tummy. White fur on his ... well you get the idea.

We enjoyed Bunsky and we miss him, but we're not planning to replace him.

I've got Daddy's method down pat and so far I've got a 100 percent perfect record. I'm not about to try again.

## Government takes up lots of space

Walking around Washington, you get an idea of just how big the federal government is.

Building height is limited to preserve the views, so there are no skyscrapers, but government buildings are big.

The Agriculture Department alone occupies over four blocks. There is the old, traditional building on the Mall, and a monster called the South Building, which stretches for blocks. Sky bridges link the two.

Commerce has a similar fortress on the other side of the mall. Some newer, small departments, such as Energy, occupy smaller quarters, just a block or two. But they have centuries yet to grow.

The biggest of the big, the Pentagon, is across the Potomac River in Virginia. It's so massive that it's hard to recognize from the ground. You can't see more than one side from the highway, and the instantly recognizable shape is not apparent from below. The side you see is massive, though.

Washington is a tourist town, and truly a people's capital. On any given day — when it's warm enough, anyway — there are thousands of Americans out touring the town, enjoying the sights, or just playing on the Mall. Americans of all colors and religions join on the broad sidewalks and vast, grassy expanse, or jam into the Smithsonian's museums, joined by visitors from around the world.

But there is another side. Nothing belonging to the government is safe from terrorist attack. Metal detectors



### Along the Sappa

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flank the entrance to every building. Guards stop each car entering a basement parking garage. One searches the trunk while another uses a mirror on a stick to check the undercarriage for bombs. Explosive sniffers and dogs are used sometimes.

The FBI has class. Truck barriers lining the sidewalks and blocking the entrances to the Hoover Building are disguised as planters. Lots of planters. Big planters.

Security guards patrol around the buildings in cars marked "FBI Police." House of Representatives office buildings are adequate, well-kept government buildings. You would not mistake them for anything else. House offices are cramped, staffs are small.

Tunnels lead under the Mall to the Capitol, where a winding corridor takes you to the Senate side. Senators have trams to take them back and forth underground; representatives have to walk. There are more metal detectors down here, of course.

In the basement, we spot Sen. Sam Brownback from Kansas, whom we have an appointment with later. We say hi, and he beckons us into the elevator

marked "senators only."

"Want a ride?" he asks. "It's not really that special, no loungers or anything."

We were not prepared for the Senate buildings: They are class, big, open, lots of marble. Senate offices are huge, staffs even bigger. Still government, but nice government. Senators live right.

No one is on the House or Senate floor, we notice. Senators and representatives wander around, meet, greet folks from back home, talk with lobbyists. Televisions everywhere play C-SPAN feeds of the floor debate. Rep. Jerry Moran tells us as few as a dozen members may be on the floor listening to the one congressman drone on.

The Speaker of the House is in his office, with another member presiding. Members keep up with the television, are called if they need to vote. They already know what is going on, and the debate is mostly for the record.

Everyone asks us what people back home are thinking. They want to know our issues. Pictures are taken, arm in arm, and we move on. It's a curious system, to say the least, but it works.

## Student doesn't like article on drugs

To the Editor:

I am writing in response to both the article in the April 4 *Oberlin Herald* about ecstasy being sold at a school dance, and Mr. Haynes' response to the letter submitted by TACT members the following week. I am also a member of TACT, and I am offended by the way *The Herald* has portrayed our organization. TACT sponsors many activities throughout the year that are specifically anti-drug abuse. As our members mentioned in their last letter, there is no way that we could have controlled what happened at that dance without searching each and every student who attended.

While the April 4 article may have been accurate with its facts, its implications were ridiculous. "The group that sponsored the dance (that was your typo, not mine), known as TACT, gives teens a chance to be role models for younger kids." This statement, along with ones about how TACT activities

are "supposedly drug free" is sandwiched between two paragraphs about drug dogs searching the school. If this does not imply that TACT is to blame and that its members should be ashamed of themselves for letting this happen, I don't know what does.

Another point I would like to make involves Mr. Haynes' response to our letter. He said that the event was "an embarrassment to your school." It is no more an embarrassment to the TACT members who tried to provide a safe, legal way for kids to have fun, than it is to the community that "allowed" an adult to smuggle the drugs into its town and sell them to minors in the first place.

I hope that *The Herald* and Mr. Haynes will stop trying to criminalize

the one organization that is actually trying to make a difference in the lives of teen-agers in this community and focus on the individuals who are responsible. Maybe even some of the good things that happen routinely at Decatur Community High School could make the front page. Just a thought.

Jake Robinson  
Oberlin

### Letter to the Editor

### Write

*The Oberlin Herald* encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

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