



AGRABILITY CHIT CHAT

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FARMING AFTER AN AMPUTATION

CONTENTS:

- CARM'S COMMENTS: Carmen Schacht
- MARK KEEPS MOVING RIGHT ALONG: Brenda Reeves
- SAFETY TIPS
- RESOURCES
- ANNOUNCEMENTS
- AGRABILITY FRIENDS AND FAMILY

CARM'S COMMENTS: Carmen Schacht

The theme for this month is farming with an amputation. Through the years, I was always aware of people who had lost a hand or arm and the hooks that were used. The first time I heard about a leg amputation was when a young man lost his leg in a big baler accident. I certainly could never tell that he had an artificial leg. He dances and everything. I have come to know another person who lost his legs in 1987. He is a bilateral amputee BK (below the knee) and AK (above the knee). He says the technology has advanced remarkably from his first set of legs to his new set. His first legs were heavy - 50 – 60 pounds. Today they are 25 pounds, with flex foot, hydraulic knee, and titanium tubing. He has been able to triple his walking distance. He says with his weight, he maxes out on a lot of the new parts. He is willing to be a guinea pig in trying out how long the new parts will stand

up to the maximum weight limit. There are a lot of things to consider. Medicare will only replace parts when needed or a prosthesis every three years. He is lucky to have good insurance and is on his 7th set of legs. His last set of legs cost \$35,000 to buy and get calibrated and up to par. More power to all of you who have an amputation and deal with prostheses. (CS)

MARK KEEPS MOVING RIGHT ALONG

On a brisk fall day in 2000, Mark Dietzenbach was busy filling his silo when the bearing went out on his chopper. He hopped on his motorcycle to head for the store to purchase a replacement bearing, not knowing that the trip would forever change his life.

As he was riding, Mark was hit head-on by a truck. Luckily for Mark, a nurse happened to be driving past and stopped to help. His leg was bleeding profusely and the nurse desperately tried to find something to use as a tourniquet to stop the bleeding. A farmer passing by offered some twine from the back of his pickup. This controlled the bleeding until the ambulance arrived. Mark was later told that the tourniquet made from twine saved his life.

Due to the severity of his injuries, Mark was air-lifted to a hospital in Rochester,

AGRABILITY CHIT CHAT

Minnesota. The doctors there determined that his leg couldn't be saved, and thus amputated it below the knee.

After Mark returned home from the hospital, he quickly learned that many of his regular chores were much more difficult than before. Mark, who lives on a farm in northeast Iowa with his wife and three children, originally had cattle, hogs, and crops. Due to his limited mobility and slowed movement after the amputation, the cattle became too dangerous for Mark to load and sort. He eventually sold all of them.

Mark says that he has been able to continue farming largely in part due to the modifications that have been made to his farm equipment. He contacted Easter Seals after his aunt and uncle explained to him how the organization had helped their son after a farming accident.

Sheri Robinson from the Easter Seals FaRM program worked with the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation to obtain funding for Mark's equipment and farm modifications. Many modifications were made, including the attachment of an adjustable hitch to the rear bumper of his pickup, which makes it easier to hook up a wagon. Steps and hand rails were installed on Mark's tractors and grain bins, which he says have greatly reduced his risk of injury when climbing. According to Mark, the most indispensable item he received was a Kawasaki Mule. Mark, who has difficulty walking, reports that the all-terrain vehicle saves him countless steps, time, and backaches.

He has also found support through the AgrAbility peer support program. Mark feels that talking with and meeting other farmers who are amputees has given him new ideas and encouragement.

Because of his difficulty with many of the farm chores, Mark says that his wife has been much more involved in the farm work since the accident. Together they raise hogs and crop farm about 500 acres of corn, beans, and hay.

Mark says that one of the positive outcomes of his accident is that he now spends more time with his children. He rides a three-wheeled bicycle so that his family can still enjoy the bike trails together. His adult tricycle has a semi-recumbent design, enabling him to lean back into the seat and use the power of his legs, back, and stomach together. This requires much less strength from his leg than a regular bicycle would.

A positive attitude has greatly helped Mark adjust to the amputation. "The one piece of advice I would offer to anyone who has recently experienced an amputation," says Mark, "is not to focus on your limitations but to look for ways to function normally in spite of them."

SAFETY TIPS:

Farmers with upper extremity amputations are at risk of secondary injuries for a variety of reasons. Listed below are several safety tips offered by the Easter Seal Society of Iowa. For more information and additional safety tips, visit

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nasd/docs/es00600.html>

1. Climbing a ladder with a prosthetic device can be dangerous. It is important not to rely on the terminal device when grasping an overhead rung. A safer solution can be to wrap the forearm of your prosthesis around the outside of the ladder.
2. Pocket hand-warmers can be used to prevent injured fingers and hands

AGRABILITY CHIT CHAT

that have decreased circulation from becoming frostbitten.

3. Tools designed for one-handed use and other laborsaving devices can assist in preventing secondary injuries to both the affected limb and the non-affected limb.

Care should be taken when working around livestock. The terminal device can easily catch on chains, collars, ropes, halters, or other materials attached to the livestock. If you use a Prehensile hand, use the furthest grip on the terminal device when grasping a cow's chain so that you can let go more easily. (BR)

RESOURCES:

The 2001 edition of First Step-A Guide for Adapting to Limb Loss is available from the Amputee Coalition of America (ACA). The ACA is a national, nonprofit amputee consumer educational organization. Visit their website at www.amputee-coalition.org or call toll-free 1-888-267-5669. Both Section 1 (Facing Amputation Surgery) and Section 2 (Are You Ready for a Prosthesis?) can be downloaded in PDF format. Go to: www.amputee-coalition.org/aca_first_step.html A hard copy of the guide is also available at no cost by calling the above-listed number.

The National Limb Loss Center is a cooperative program of the ACA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It is an information clearinghouse that provides comprehensive resources for people with limb loss as well as their families and friends. Visit www.amputee-coalition.org/nllic_about.html or call ACA at 1-888-267-5669.

The Indiana Hand Center offers information about the transportation and care of an

amputation immediately following an accident. Go to: www.indianahandcenter.com/emerg.html or call 1-800-888-HAND.

The Limbless Association offers information, advice and support for amputees. Their website includes a database containing a selection of the latest developments in prosthetics for both upper and lower limbs. Visit www.limbless-association.org/index.shtml for more information.

Performing basic daily tasks can be challenging after an amputation. Visit www.amp-info.net/assist.htm for tips (including photos) of techniques for activities such as shoe tying with one arm and putting on a watch with one hand.

To obtain a list of manufacturers of adult tricycles, contact the Iowa Program for Assistive Technology at 1-800-331-3027 or by email at infotech@uiowa.edu. (BR)

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Reminder The statewide AgrAbility conference will be held on Saturday, April 13th at the Iowa Historical Building in Des Moines. All AgrAbility consumers and their families are invited to attend. The main focus of this year's meeting will be the unique needs of care givers and care receivers. Breakout sessions will be offered for the two groups. Look for more information in the mail at the end of this month.

Iowa pork producers are invited to learn more about finishing management techniques at one of the 2002 Iowa Pork Regional Conferences scheduled for later this month. The Iowa Pork Industry Center at Iowa State University, Iowa Pork Producers Association, and ISU Extension are co-sponsoring the series of five meetings

AGRABILITY CHIT CHAT

at different sites around the state. For more information, contact Marty Schwager at the Iowa Pork Producers Association (1-800-372-7675) or John Mabry at the Iowa Pork Industry Center (1-515-294-4103). Information can also be obtained online at www.extension.iastate.edu/ipic/events.html

Midwest cow-calf producers are invited to the 2002 Annual Cornbelt Cow-Calf Conference on Saturday, February 23, at the Coliseum in Ottumwa. This one-day conference will focus on management and production practices in the cow-calf industry. Contact Byron Leu at the Jefferson County Extension office (1-641-472-4166, email: bleu@iastate.edu) for more details.

University of Iowa Health Care has a new name for its Center for Disabilities. It is now called the Center for Disabilities and Development, Iowa's University Center for Excellence on Disabilities. For more information, call 1-877-686-0031 or visit www.uihealthcare.com/cdd/ (BR)

AGRABILITY FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Southeast Iowa AgrAbility Friends and Family
March 9, 1:00 p.m., Tipton Pizza Hut
Contact Ron Bradley (563-724-3918) or Dennis Byrnes (563-946-3905) for more information.

Freewheeler's AgrAbility Friends and Family
April 6, 1:00 p.m., New Hampton Library
Contact Carmen Schacht for more information: (563-547-2932).

Find the AgrAbility Friends and Family leader nearest you and give him/her a call if you would like to offer your support or share informally with other farm families with disabilities: Call Carmen Schacht, 563-547-2932, or access: www.extension.iastate.edu/agrability/friends-and-family.html

IOWA AGRABILITY - A joint effort of ISU Extension and the Farm Family Rehabilitation Management (FaRM) Program of Easter Seals Iowa. The program can help farm family members with a disability stay in farming.

This newsletter from the Iowa AgrAbility Project will be sent monthly to AgrAbility families and other interested individuals. Please send comments and suggestions to:

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96 LeBaron Hall, Ames, IA 50011

E-mail: breeves@iastate.edu

Phone: ISU Answerline at 1-800-262-3804

TDD: 1-800-854-1658.

Web site: www.extension.iastate.edu/agrability/

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