

Making choices on the go

It's funny how holiday weekend plans can change with one action.

The Sidekick and I were about to dive into our weekend list of 'to-dos' when she decided to lift something that was more than a little lady of her stature should tackle. She twisted and stopped on the spot.

"You okay?" I asked.

"Oh yeah, I just pulled something in my back a bit," she said, then followed with "Oh gawd, I can't take a deep breath!"

She hobbled to the house, the pain of the muscle spasm burning in the upper middle region of her back. She was relegated to the sofa with a handful of muscle relaxants and a steady diet of Food Network programming, complemented with the heating pad.

Okay, change of plans.

Despite her claims that she'd be back out to help me in 'an hour or two,' I knew I was pretty much on my own for the rest of the long weekend.

We had 14 acres of hay ready to be baled. We had a flock of sheep that had to be separated into two breeding groups and we also had a gate to be built to contain the two groups of sheep.

There were also four sheep that I'd promised to deliver to a buyer in Milton.

It's times like this when those who work in the agricultural arena start to *reallly* question their sanity.

But it's always a short-lived questioning. I started to prioritize the tasks at hand.

Hay is perishable so that was top priority. The baler had been acting up, indiscriminately breaking shear bolts (a safety bolt that breaks instead of causing hundreds of dollars damage), when it wasn't even under load. Before starting, I crawled under the baler, owner's manual in hand, to check the settings. The book and the actual settings seemed reversed, so I called a friend who has a similar baler.

With my Blackberry on speakerphone, and both of us under our balers, we compared our settings— compared to his baler, mine was miles off.

And his wasn't breaking shear bolts.

A quick adjustment to his 'settings' and I was good to go. (Obviously the previous owner was dyslexic.)

I baled the first field non-stop. I was feeling pretty good, things were happen-

Ted Brown



ing and The Sidekick was pleased that I could keep going in spite of her being laid up. One field down, and I moved to the last field. A neighbour stopped me briefly to chat as he looked at the bale thrower.

"Hey Ted, did you know you have 'shot bearing?'" he asked.

Sure nuff, the pulley was wobbling on the shaft. I checked the driving shed— whew, I had one in stock.

In 45 minutes, the bearing was replaced and once again I headed to the field.

About 30 bales into the field, I watched a long black 'snake' fire off into the air behind me as the bale thrower stopped.

The main drive belt had broken. And I knew I didn't have a replacement in stock.

Back in the shed I disabled the bale thrower, set it to simply drop the bales on the ground. I finished the field in an hour.

Monday, as The Sidekick and I gathered up the bales with the front-end loader (she was good enough to drive the tractor), we actually wrapped up our holiday weekend jobs ahead of schedule. We even had time to go out for dinner that night and later drop by friends for a social beverage.

As I slid into bed later that night, and reviewed the weekend's accomplishments, a thought came to mind.

We'd entered the weekend full of expectations— all dashed with the pull of a muscle.

Yet, instead of becoming frustrated, with some adjustments, we got through it, in spite of that hurdle.

You know, life is like that. When you wake in the morning, you have no choice what challenge is going to be thrown at you that day.

But you do have one choice.

You have the choice of how you deal with it.

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