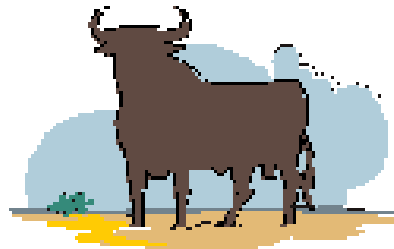


Fun on the Farm

By Dr Pete



There was a time before I became a mobile washer.

It isn't easy to remember. But even as a child I enjoyed water. I messed around with the garden hose, washed a car or two, sprayed my sister and the like, but I wasn't yet a "cleaning professional". Way back in those distant times, my involvement with local farms began. I have always thought farms are fun. When you can combine farms and water, the fun really starts. Back then, about a mile from my house there was a country farm. In the summer I would walk there. Kids in those days walked almost everywhere. On the farm there was a big field with a barbed wire fence. In the center of the field there was a small pond. The fishing in this small pond was just plain amazing. Throw in the bait and you would catch a fish. There were big ones in there too. I never understood why the fish were so big in a small pond. It was impossible to determine the depth. I figured it was so deep that fish could go vertical instead of horizontal, which maybe increased their swimming space (I was a kid remember). The farmer was the down to earth sort. He didn't mind me fishing in his pond, as long as I didn't bother his bull. The bull however was free to bother me any time he felt like it. There were times when I would arrive at the field and the bull would be waiting for me, so I would turn around and go home. Other times the bull would be nowhere in sight, maybe in the barn, maybe over the rise on the other side of the field. This is when I would crawl through the fence and head for the pond.

At this point I think I should tell you some more about the bull. His name was Charger. As I remember him he stood ten feet tall. He had sharp looking horns. His nostrils flared out when he saw you. Stuff flew from them. His breath was hot as a pressure washer burner that won't shut off. I know this because of a few "close encounters" that he and I had. Another thing about him was he had an attitude..... a bad attitude. I mean it was like he thought he owned the place! As a kid I never could understand what his problem was. Whatever the reason for his sour disposition I know that when he saw me his eyes burned with hate, and he wanted to kill me. But the fishing was good so I had to take the risk. Once or twice I had a friend come with me. None ever came with me twice.

One day I had a real good size fish on the line. He had jumped once and I saw that he was a big one. As I was working the line Charger walked over the hill. At first he didn't look my way. Then he turned and noticed me. He was a good distance away but close enough that I could hear him snort at the first sight of me. Luckily, he had a lot of ground to cover between him and me. He began his charge. Normally at this point I would haul it for the fence easily reaching it before he did, but the fish was a good one. I was so close to landing it! Well, I should have run. Charger came around the pond running fast and hard, his hoofs pounding the sod. Finally, dropping my fishing tackle, I took off around the pond trying to keep him on the far shore. He was closing by the time I had run all the way around. I sprinted for the fence. The distance between us was growing shorter and shorter. I officially had the begeezus scared out of me at this point. I was sure that my folks would find parts of me strewn from one side of the field to the other, and I was sure those parts would have been stomped to mush. I don't have any idea how I made it to that barbed wire. There was a low wire and a high wire with about two feet between them. I dove through the wires without slowing. I got scratched up along the way and hit the ground. The bull hit the wires, stopped, and snorted snot all over me. His breath was very hot. His eyes were big, wild, and blood-shot.

Decades later, remembering it still shakes me to the core. I have never, until now, told anyone this story. This story is true. The bull and the farm are gone now and houses fill the field. I have finally let this event come to light because as a pressure washing professional you need to know this story has a hidden meaning about pressure washing and work available on farms. Landing jobs, like landing fish, may be a challenge. There will be obstacles to overcome, (like bulls and fences), but if this type of work is important to your business you need to be the one that won't quit. My friend, farms are challenging places to work, but they can be fun.

Remember most farmers are down to earth, but in my experience they also tend to be good at business. They don't waste their money, but can see value in having you work for them when they know you can clean faster and better than they can. So walk yourself into their office, or milking parlor, or field (watch for bulls), and have a talk with them. Bring a computer generated brochure that lists the jobs you can do for them.

Those jobs include, but are by no means limited to, the following:

- Vehicle washing
- Equipment degreasing
- Tractors and all the attachments
- Anything that was buried in the mud (now that's fun)
- Paint prep for buildings and equipment
- Manure pit cleaning
- Barn (interior) wash down (dairy, poultry, horses, pigs, whatever)
- Roofs
- Don't forget manure spreaders!
- Drain de-icing, culvert deicing, thawing out whatever
- Sanitizing (big for poultry operations)

Now let's talk about things to remember when working on a farm:

- Electric fences – grab the insulated grip, not the wire.
- Never leave fences open behind you.
- Out in the field many times there isn't a water source, you need to be able to carry your own.
- The trick for cleaning manure, like most organics, is to soak it and let it absorb the water before actually trying to clean it off. Lots of water makes it much easier.
- Don't use detergent until you are down to the surface, detergent on top of an inch of manure isn't going to clean the surface.
- Rotary nozzles really cut it, don't leave home without them. I like the big RotoJet. It needs to be sized correctly (nozzle size) to give you maximum power. Use a filter before the nozzle because farms have a lot of dirt.
- Most animals are not after you (no bull).
- Do not contaminate feed or drinking water.
- As a general rule, don't spray it if it's alive. That's a general rule, there was one farmer in my past that got sprayed, but that's another story.
- Heat almost always helps, but inside it creates a lot of steam and too much can warp wood.
- When working inside buildings, shut down the power. Do not spray directly into power boxes or motors. Tell the farmer to leave the power off as long as possible after you finish. If the guy wants you to spray close to electrical equipment tell him you aren't responsible for repairs if things spark when he turns the power on.
- When washing down the outside of buildings always keep away from the electric service entrances.
- If they want the dust blown off the engine in the old pick-up, tell them there is a really good chance it won't start when you're done.
- Keep your mouth closed. Do not lick your lips.

Now let's talk about PPE (personal protective equipment):

- High quality rain gear is a must. Buy the regular cheap stuff and it will fail you, especially if it's cold. If it does you will get soaked and stink. It can actually become a major issue as hypothermia sets in. Also, when you get home you may not be allowed in the house.
- Hearing protection. You should already use hearing protection. If you pressure wash much you will lose your hearing. It will be gradual, but in the future when you look at the person talking to you and can't figure out what they are saying you will remember I told you so. On the farm I recommend headphone type hearing protection because they cover your ears totally. This keeps flying debris (manure) out of your ears, it also keeps them warm.
- OSHA approved eye protection should be worn. Yes, you will need to constantly clean the glasses, goggles, or face shield. I wish there was a better way.
- When doing extensive inside cleaning, I recommend you use a respirator. Find one that is OSHA approved for airborne contaminants that are biological. These biological contaminants include bacteria, mold, spores, fungi, and viruses. Buy extra filters. Anyone who has used these while washing inside a steamy barn knows they get soaked and you end up not being able to breathe through them. You will need to change them out as you work.

I have a quick parting story. I started my business in 1988. It was late fall when I got my first job on a local dairy farm. The job was a simple wash down of a manure spreader. I scheduled the job out about a week. The weather turned from fall to winter during that week. The day of the job it was 15 degrees and the wind was whipping. The manure was a foot thick and frozen solid. 500 gallons and 2.5 hours later I finished. I learned to watch the weather better that day. Most farm jobs are not that severe. That said, if taking the bull by the horns scares you too much, look for work elsewhere. ~ Pete Case

