
What a Load of Manure

Put out by cow poop. By C.L. Beck



Way, way back in the winter of 1996 (GP#28), I ran my one and only editorial survey. The number one request I got? More humor! Ever since then, I've done my best to grant that wish.



Considering animal waste is a guy thing.

I base that opinion on observation. Just go to any garden center—at least here in Utah—and you'll hear men discussing the merits of manure. Apparently it cures everything from warts to hiccups. It even helps veggies grow. So they say, anyway.

Speaking of which, the plot we have at our home is a cement pad. Think I'm kidding? Try to stab a pitchfork in it, and you'll agree. Every year, we till in loads of sand and mulch. By next spring, it's hard enough to play basketball on again.

One spring, my husband, Russ, mentioned the problem to our neighbor—a farmer who grows vegetables large enough to drive pickups.

"Ya need manure," he said, leaning on his shovel.

"Turkey or cow?" Russ asked. He knew those animals were the farmer's main livestock.

"I can give you a truckload." The neighbor whacked a weed with his shovel.

Russ hitched up his pants, spit out of the side of his mouth, and waited. He'd learned our neighbor needed time to pull his thoughts together.

"Turkey's too fresh right now, better go with cow manure. Bring your truck on over to the farm in the morning and I'll load ya up."

"You sure you don't want one more bucketful?" our neighbor said.



Russ came home overjoyed. “Guess what? We’re getting a load of fertilizer tomorrow.”

“Nice, composted fertilizer in 50-pound bags?” I asked hopefully.

“Nope, real cow manure.” Russ walked to the kitchen sink bowlegged, like he’d just ridden in from a dusty cattle drive, and poured himself a glass of water.

“This cow manure . . . it’s all aged, and dry, and odor-free, right?” I had terrible visions of big, smelly cow pies flung across the garden.

“I think so. Maybe. But it doesn’t matter, because it’s free.”

Who can argue with free? Still, I decided I’d better go along for the ride, just to make sure of the situation.

The next day, we drove to the farm. Our neighbor had his front-end loader ready and signaled us over to a 300-foot mountain of cow chips. As Russ backed the pickup to it, I shouted to him over the roar of the loader’s engine, “I don’t think we need to get very much, just a small . . . ”

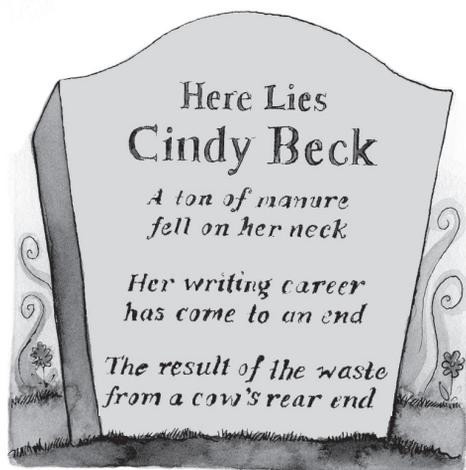
Wham! A load of manure landed in the bed of our truck, and

I instantly wished I'd thought to close the rear window. Manure dust floated into my hair and eyes, and I started coughing.

When my throat finally opened up, I tried again. "We probably don't need a lot . . ."

Wham! Another load dropped into the truck. Then, before I even had a chance to catch a breath, a third batch landed.

By now the front end of the truck was slowly lifting off the ground, and I had visions of the epitaph they'd engrave on my headstone:



My nasal passages felt like someone stuffed them with hay bales, and my throat was so constricted I figured I'd need a crowbar to open it. I managed to nudge Russ and make a slashing motion across my throat. Normally that signal means "stop," but in this case it had a double meaning.

Russ got both of them. He leaned out of the truck and hollered to our neighbor, who turned off the engine on his loader and said, "You sure you don't want one more bucketful?"

Our trip home was like something out of *The Beverly Hillbillies*. The rear bumper smacked every pothole, sowing cow pies on the highway, while the front end hardly touched asphalt.

When we got to the house, we unloaded the stuff by hand. (Well, OK, we did get to use shovels.) By the time we were done, I smelled more like a cow than the cow ever had. As we stood in the back of the empty pickup, pooped in more ways than one, I put my hands on my hips and said, "Russ, I am telling you now: We are *never* getting a load of cow manure for the garden again."

Russ nodded his head in agreement, leapt over the side of the truck, and replied, "Yup, you're right. Next year we'll get turkey." ❖