



## When Anxiety Attacks...

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*Cherie Langlois*

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Cherie finds gardening to be a great stress reliever. Research shows that gardening can also be physically good for you. After Desert Discoveries, I'd planned to blog about a nice, innocuous farmy topic, like my lettuce wheelbarrow or my flock's shearing adventure.

Unfortunately, news of our imminent Swine Flu pandemic was kind of difficult to miss last week, and given the fact that I tend to be a mite susceptible to health anxiety – and have read Stephen King's *The Stand* three times (and seen the mini-series twice) – I had a little trouble calmly focusing on my nice, innocuous farmy topic.

OK, I totally freaked. At first.

I don't want to contribute to mass hysteria by discussing scary Swine Flu details (as in, OMG it's already here in Washington!).

But I do want to offer a few strategies for keeping anxiety levels down until this whole thing blows over – which it will, eventually. By the way, I'm writing this as much for myself as for you.

Turn off the news. Thankfully, I don't watch TV news, or else I'd really be a mess. However, I'm a voracious reader, meaning I devour news stories and research things to death, looking for comforting answers but often finding scary information, too. There's a fine line between staying informed and letting sensationalistic news stories make you sick with worry.

Go outside and get busy. If weather permits, go outside to garden, brush your horses, take a country walk/bike ride, or do anything else that you enjoy doing and keeps you busy enough to tone down the worry chatter in your head. You can certainly keep busy indoors, but there's something especially relaxing about being out in the fresh air and natural light on your farm.

Find the beauty in the little things around you. Steep yourself in beauty, scent, and the moment. We're lucky: on our farms, beauty always surrounds us. When I practice staying in the moment, using my senses to focus on hummingbirds zipping around the flowering red currant, the silky-soft summer coat emerging under my horse Sophie's winter pelage, or the tangy scent of emerging lemon balm, I have much less room inside to feel anxiety.

Laugh! I know this Swine Flu thing is serious stuff, but laughter truly is the best medicine for just about anything – including anxiety. Thank goodness we have our families, our friends, and our animals to make us laugh.

For example, this morning I discovered three ducks have what I call "mad broody hen disease." Two are nearly sitting on top of each other, trying to cover the same clutch of eggs, and carrying on a whistling argument. Another hen sits a foot away from them, on just one egg. For some reason, it just cracked me up (no pun intended).

Why not plan on watching a funny DVD this weekend, like me?  
(DO NOT watch the *Stand*!)

Wishing you good health!



~ Cherie

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