

Most people are familiar with the word “haywire.” Even though most of us have never seen a bale of hay bound with wire, we understand where the term originated. And, we know that something that has gone “haywire,” has gone wrong in some respect. Or, something has gotten a temporary fix that is makeshift and probably will need redoing in the future. According to Webster’s dictionary this use of “haywire” dates to 1929 when hay bales were fastened with wire.

But, in recent decades, something has replaced haywire in reality without affecting the term used more symbolically. Why don’t we say that something has gone “baler twine?” I thought about it this morning at four o’clock while I was in the lambing barn. Baler twine has to be one of the most useful items on a farm.

As I moved down the row of lambing jugs, I stopped at a pen that had a neat bowtie of twine on the top board of the gate. I had tied the twine there a few days ago to remind me that the tiny lambs in that pen needed a supplemental bottle of milk replacer.

At the end of the row of lambing jugs are four more temporary pens. Lambs have come very quickly, and a shortage of small enclosures where ewes and lambs can be isolated for a few days became a problem. A few old gates and some baler twine solved that dilemma, and the lambs and their mothers were just as secure in those private quarters as were those in the regular pens. We have the old-fashioned latches on the barn doors—the kind that allow one to “pull in the latchstring.” Our latchstrings are baler twine.

I try to keep a piece of twine in the pocket of my barn jacket. I never know when I might need it. Slipping a piece of twine through the collar of the border collie made a fine temporary leash, even though her visits to the veterinarian with this restraint weren’t quite as stylishly accessorized as those of most of the other dogs in the waiting room.

Baler twine is very useful in our unheated greenhouse. We fasten twine from crosspieces overhead down to the ground for tomatoes and cucumbers to climb. In the open garden, I often use a piece of twine to bind the stem of a trailing or weak plant to a stake.

Our morning glories climb the woodshed wall on twine. One of the bird feeders is suspended from twine fastened around a branch of the plum tree. A bundle of feed sacks is bound with baler twine.

We mark our garden rows with a long piece of twine. I tie gates shut with twine, we close the wool bags with twine, and twine keeps the hog panels we use in the lambing barn this time of year secure.

Then, too, of course, we do use baler twine on hay bales. If we had no twine to re-use after we remove it from the bales, we'd probably have to buy some just to meet our other needs. But, things still go "haywire" from time to time.