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Advisor Answers

Visual FoxPro 5.0 and 3.0

Visual FoxPro 5.0 and 3.0 and FoxPro 2.x

Q: I am using SQL Select to pull fields from a table and display the contents in a list box. One of the fields is a memo. How can I display the contents of the memo field rather than the string 'Memo'?

-Debi Lupton (via the Internet)

A: When you're displaying a memo field by itself or in a grid, you can use an Edit box. But, of course, that doesn't work as part of the field list for a list or combo box.

The solution is to do something that converts the memo data to a string. There are a couple of functions you can use to extract all or part of the data in a memo field and turn it into character data.

If you want the whole memo field, use LEFT(). First, figure out the maximum length of the field:

```
CALC MAX(LEN(TheMemo)) TO nMaxMemo
```

Then, use LEFT(TheMemo,nMaxMemo) in your query. This approach is best when you know that the data in the memo field isn't too large and doesn't contain line breaks. I often use memo fields for things like street address to avoid limiting their length. This approach works nicely in that case. (Pre-calculating the maximum solves the problem that SQL SELECT creates its result cursor based on the size of the data in the first record of the result. We need to ensure that the field created is wide enough for the largest value.)

Often, however, memo data is quite long or contains line breaks. In those cases, you have some other alternatives. If the only issue is length, use LEFT(), but limit yourself to a reasonable length such as the amount that actually fits into the list.

When a memo may contain multiple lines, your best bet is probably MLINE(). This function pulls out one line at a time from a memo field. It's coordinated with the setting of MEMOWIDTH - from MLINE()'s point of view, a line ends either with CHR(13) or when you have SET("MEMOWIDTH") characters. So be sure to SET MEMOWIDTH large enough to give you a whole line. You'll usually want the first line of the memo field for use in a list, so code like the following should do the trick:

```
nOldMemoWidth = SET("MEMOWIDTH")  
SET MEMOWIDTH TO 80 && a pretty good line size
```

```
* now, in your field list, use the expression:  
PADR(MLINE(TheMemo,1),80)
```

One of the nice things about MLINE() is that it stops at a word break where LEFT() simply returns the number of characters you specify. PADR() here serves the same purpose as pre-calculating the maximum above – it ensures that the field created is large enough for the largest value.

If you do want a line other than the first, MLINE() can accommodate you, too. Just specify the line number in the second parameter:

```
* use the second line  
MLINE(TheMemo,2)
```

Don't forget to reset MEMOWIDTH when your form is done.

–Tamar