

# Let Fertilizer Work for You

Basic costs of production on the farm, as any qualified farmer can readily testify, are high and rapidly going higher.

Equipment costs and needs are rising steadily, the costs of land and real estate taxes are rising sharply, wages are going up steadily, most material costs are increasing.

Meanwhile, prices farmers receive remain steady or rise more slowly than costs. This forces successful farmers to find ways to become more efficient or to increase output.

In his quest for more efficient operation, for more dollars of profit from the same amount of land, the farmer must not overlook the potential of fertilizer.

Fertilizer — whether it is in the form of manure or commercial fertilizer — can get much higher production at little extra cost for many farmers. Often, increased levels of fertilization can result in dollars per acre of increased income with only pennies per acre of additional cost.

This is true because of the high basic costs of production. No matter how small the levels of production, the farmer today has high built in costs of land, taxes, equipment and supplies. His production must be large enough to cover these high costs before he can begin to earn anything for his own labor.

But once the farmer achieves a level of production high enough to cover his basic costs, increased production beyond this point can be highly profitable.

Studies show, for instance, that many farmers need at least 80 (the cost would probably be lower for many local farmers

who supply most of their own labor and have low equipment costs.) bushels of corn per acre to meet costs. Only corn produced beyond 80 bushels is profitable for the farmer; only the extra bushels contribute to the farmer's income.

If higher levels of fertilization — and other improved practices — can take the farmer's corn yields from the 90-100 level to the 125-150 bushels per acre level, the farmer's net income can be increased by several times.

The point is that relatively small increases in production can make relatively large increases in net income.

A word of caution, however. Not all land can profitably use more fertilizer. Adding fertilizer to ground which does not need it is a waste of money. In some instances, too much fertilizer can actually stunt plant growth and result in lower crop yields.

In arriving at his fertilization program, the farmer cannot afford to guess at the quality of his soil. If his guess is wrong, he adds too much or little fertilizer; he may actually have too much of one nutrient and not enough of another; being wrong is costly.

For a small fee, the farmer can have his soil checked at Pennsylvania State University through the local Extension Service.

No matter where the study is made, the farmer must know, in this time of higher and higher production costs, the quality of his soil.

And he must not spare the relatively small cost involved in making his soil the best that it can be for the coming growing season.

# The Animal Waste Issue

Farmers should begin to put some thought into their animal waste disposal systems and procedures.

The closer the farmer is to urban neighbors or to things of interest to urban people — such as streams — the more he needs to be concerned.

The concern should also increase in proportion to the size of the farmer's waste problem.

One study in Canada showed, for instance, that 100 acres is needed to handle the annual output of 10,000 layers, or 1,000 hogs, or 200 feeders or 100 dairy cattle. Using this standard, many local farms reach or even exceed the capacity to effectively absorb animal waste.

Yet, the trend is toward more intensive farming with greater concentrations of poultry and livestock on fewer acres. Clearly, as this trend continues, the animal waste problem mushrooms.

And, as the waste output grows, the farmer runs head-on into trends toward urban sprawl, which places urban-oriented persons at his doorstep.

There's also the environmental issue; when animal wastes wash into stream networks, those animal wastes are considered pollutants by the urban folk, the same as farmers view urban sewage as pollution.

What should the farmer do about animal waste?

The answer will vary tremendously, depending on the size and type of farm loca-

tion, the farm's location in relation to streams and neighbors, the type of neighbors and many other factors.

The one thing which will apply to each and every farmer, however, is this: Be continually aware of the animal waste issue.

Consider it particularly carefully if and when the farming operation is expanded. Just as no alert industrial businessman should expand his plant and its pollution output without building in pollution controls, no alert farmer should expand his farming operation without providing for effective control and use of animal wastes.

At a time when the handwriting is on the wall, when the move is clearly toward much more stringent control of wastes, no farmer should be creating additional problems for himself.

At the same time, as farmers, agribusinessmen and educators put more time and effort into solving existing problems, new know-how and equipment will become available with which to solve existing animal waste problems. Farmers should remain alert to what is happening elsewhere and how it could apply to their own operations.

The widely publicized research at Penn State toward development of a drying system which may ultimately convert chicken manure from a bulky, often costly, waste into a profitable and lightweight commercial fertilizer is only one of hundreds of research projects showing great potential.

Work toward "recycling" animal wastes, the same as water is treated and reused in urban areas, is also far advanced.

There is even work underway to use some urban waste products as animal feeds.

While far along in terms of research, however, much of the work awaits public acceptance and development of technology and systems necessary for actual usage.

Issues and movements, such as the present move toward a clean environment, tend to attract emotional crusaders and opportunists, as well as many practical persons sincerely concerned about the environment.

Farmers need to remain aware and alert to the real issue of animal waste so the problem can be solved in an orderly manner without unreasonable or unnecessary costs for farmers and consumers.



## NOW IS THE TIME . . .

By Max Smith  
Lancaster County Agent

**To Control Roof Water—**Pollution is a very timely subject and one that everyone is vitally interested in; however, it is one of those problems that exists almost everywhere and is very difficult to correct. On dairy and livestock farms, producers are urged to keep roof water from running through the barnyard or the feedlot, in order to reduce the amount of solids that will wash into nearby streams.

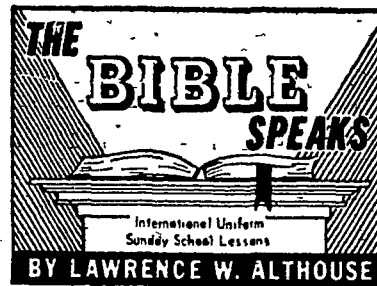
This may take some extra diversion ditches and some extra roof spouting, but seems to be the thing to do.

**To Sell Fat Cattle —** This article is not intended to advise the selling of all steers at this time, since the market has strengthened. It is intended to

advise the sale of fat steers when they reach the desired grade and weight. Most feeders are trying to get steers to the Choice Grade weighing from 1,000 to 1,200 pounds. To feed them longer and gamble on the higher market would be risky and expensive feeding.

**To Stress Management—**Many swine and sheep producers are going through the spring farrowing and lambing time. This is one of the most important times of the season and producers should give the very closest attention to the animals at this time. A few hours spent with a new litter of pigs or a ewe at lambing time will help increase the number of young weaned and increase profits. Be on the time, since the market has job at all times during these weeks.

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### TO BE A NEIGHBOR

Lesson for March 7, 1971

Background Scripture: Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-37.  
Devotional Reading: 1 John 4:11-21

A family in our church was on their way by automobile to Florida. On a major highway in North Carolina their car broke down, stranding them "in the middle of nowhere."

The husband attempted to find what was wrong, but without avail. Cars whizzed by on either side and, although it was obvious that the family was in distress, no one stopped or even slowed down. After a considerable period of time had elapsed, a car slowed down and then stopped. Inside were two youths, long-haired and bearded! Could they be of help, they wanted to know?

Although this had hardly been the source of help the family had expected (and although they may have been just a bit apprehensive at the "hippie" appearance of these two young men), they explained their plight and accepted the youths' offer to tow them to the nearest town and repair garage.

Who is my neighbor? This family was deeply impressed by this incident because they received help in time of need from two persons whom ordinarily they would not have thought of as the "neighborly type." This is the same factor which we find in Jesus' parable of "the Good Samaritan." What made that story so remarkable to his listeners is that "good" and "Samaritan" were two words no Jew would have thought of putting together. As you are probably aware, there was a deep,

long-standing animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans and the latter were regarded almost as "untouchables." Jesus could not have picked a more despised person to serve as his illustration of the true neighbor.

The story comes into being because a lawyer (actually a scribe or specialist in the religious law, a theologian) asked a philosophical question: "And who is my neighbor?" What are the limits of this love I am supposed to bestow upon others? The Pharisees, it is said, believed that the obligation of loving one's neighbor went no further than one's fellow Pharisees. Others believed that neighborliness was intended only for fellow Jews.

It appears that the man wanted to engage Jesus in a theological debate. Jesus, however, makes it clear that he too is concerned about theory and not enough about deeds. The Jews assumed that their teachings were theologically or doctrinally correct. The Samaritans, by comparison, were people who the Jews held to be theologically incorrect. Yet Jesus shows in his story that what is really important is not a man's religious theories or doctrines, but his actions.

### "Good Guys" and "Bad Guys"

Compare the three people in the story. Two of these are religious professionals, the ones who would be expected to do the "right" thing. The other, a Samaritan, not only was not a professional but, as a Samaritan, a "wrong" believer. Yet, he did the loving thing, while the other two refused to get involved. The moral is clear: the loving heretic is more pleasing to God than the unloving person who is doctrinally or theologically sound. It is what we do, not what we say we believe that is of greatest importance.

Secondly, Jesus is saying that any man, whether he be sinner or Samaritan, who needs our help is our neighbor. In other words, there are no limits to this love that God calls from us, there is no one to be excluded, no matter how unworthy they may seem. Jesus finishes this story with a twist. He indicates that the real question is not "Who is my neighbor?" but . . . "To whom am I called to be a neighbor?"

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