

Do We Use Our Produce?

Do we as dairymen use the product that we produce?

This has been the opening of brief talks by the new Lancaster County Dairy Princess, Sue Kauffman, Elizabethtown RD1, before two leading Lancaster County dairy groups, the Holstein Breeders Association and the Guernsey Breeders Association, at their annual field days recently.

Basically, Miss Kauffman asked: How can the dairy industry be strong if dairymen themselves don't believe enough in their product to use it and promote it every chance they get?

Specifically, she asked, "Are we our own worst enemies? What do we buy when we go to a restaurant or out with the guys? How can we expect others to use milk if we don't ourselves?"

When eating out, Miss Kauffman concludes, always add a glass of milk to the menu. And maybe the person next to you will say, "I'll take a glass of milk, too."

Maybe the dairy princess could be persuasive in getting others to have a glass of milk than most of the rest of us. But we shouldn't sell ourselves short. The power of example is great.

Just one person promoting a glass of milk at every opportunity may not decide the fate of the dairy industry. But hundreds of our readers are strongly dependent upon the health of the dairy industry. All of them together repeatedly urging "a glass of milk" definitely can make big difference.

Have a glass of milk. That's an order to someone else, something the dairyman can't enforce.

I'll have a glass of milk. That's a personal commitment. Anyone can make that choice.

And because people do imitate each other, particularly in areas such as dress and eating styles, ordering a glass of milk every chance you get is both healthy and good business.

We think it's necessary to go one step farther. We think every farmer should understand and believe in his product so that he can be a promoter of his own welfare and his industry's welfare everywhere he goes.

In the past, this wasn't so important, although we suspect many of the best farmers have always been good salesmen of their products and their industry.

Today, as the number of farmers continually declines and as the potential for substitute products grows, farmers must begin to consider promotion as an absolutely essential part of their job.

While individual farmers may object to being compelled to set aside money for promotion, we don't see how anyone can object to saying, "I'll have a glass of milk," when he really does like milk and believes it's a lot healthier than another beverage.

Or to saying, "I like the new, lean pork better all the time," when what he's saying is the truth.

Understanding your product, believing in it, using it — we think this is one of the best possible approaches to promoting farm products and keeping the farm economy healthy.

Hog-Corn Ratio Starts Up Again

About two-thirds of the feed used by the typical hog producer is corn, according to the USDA. And this has led some farmers to gear their hog enterprises directly to the supply and price of corn and hogs.

The "hog-corn ratio" was a term that originated in the mid-1920's to describe the profitability of hog production. Hog producers know the ratio as the number of bushels of corn that can be exchanged for 100 pounds of live hog at current prices.

A high ratio, say of around 20, means that corn is relatively cheap in relation to hogs and it's highly profitable for the farmer to feed his corn to his hogs. A lower ratio, say around 10, means corn prices are up or hog prices down, making it more costly and less profitable to feed hogs.

As farmers know, corn prices have been relatively high and there's been a glut of hogs, making hog prices low. This means a low ratio now exists.

But currently, it's uncertain if corn prices will remain high and the hog glut is easing, bringing pork prices back up some. Things, at least pending the outcome of the corn crop, are looking better for the hog producer.

In theory, at least, the farmer should sell his corn direct when the ratio is very low, saving himself the work, perhaps even loss, of feeding out low priced hogs.

In practice, as farmers know, the market is highly unpredictable and a situation that starts out looking good or bad may be the opposite by the time the hogs are marketed a few months later. As a result, most successful hog producers stay in continuous operation, with the idea that efficient operators make enough more in good

times than they lose in bad times that they'll come out ahead in the long run.

Some successful farmers modify this practice of steady and continuous operation to an extent by cutting back a little just before what looks to them like a coming market glut, or expanding a little during good times. Others don't hesitate to take advantage of good buys in corn and grain when prices for feed are so low that it would be difficult to lose even if hog prices dropped.

Because it does represent a basic profitability relationship, farmers should stay aware of the hog-corn ratio or a similar beef-corn ratio. The following is a brief USDA summary of how the hog-corn ratio has fluctuated during the past three and a half years:

During 1968, the ratio averaged 18.0 and it hovered around the same figure for much of the first half of 1969.

In June 1969 the ratio broke 20. In fact, the 1969 average, 20.3, was a record high for a whole year.

February 1970 stands as the high mark for a single month—24.1. And the ratio remained very favorable until August when corn prices started to climb and hog prices were going down.

The ratio dropped 2.7 points from August to September 1970 and continued down to a low of 10.7 in January 1971. Most of the drop was due to declining hog prices. Many farmers saw no profit in feeding corn made expensive by drought and blight.

Also many farmers became less anxious to raise hogs during 1971 than they had been during 1970.

Late in winter 1970, feeder pigs 40 to 60 pounds at Illinois markets were averaging \$29 per head. When the prices of hogs fell, feeder pig prices fell faster. By late 1970 they were around \$12 per head, 50 percent drop from a year earlier, compared to slaughter hog price drops of around 40 percent.

Winter prices for feeder pigs strengthened and were averaging \$16 by June. Prices are expected to improve further in second half, particularly if the corn crop looks favorable.

The hog-corn ratio has turned more favorable to producers lately, standing at 12.2 in June 1971.

NOW IS THE TIME . .

By Max Smith
Lancaster County Agent



To Utilize Corn Crop

The blight condition in many corn fields has changed in the past week; growers with the "T" strain of cytoplasm (not resistant) should be keeping a close watch on their fields. Spraying with a fungicide has been suggested when lesions are on leaves above the ear of corn; if this is not done, then some of this corn might be made into silage before it gets too dry. Even though some of this corn may have been planted for grain, it might be a good idea to put the "T" strains in the silo and keep the "N" strains (resistant) for grain purposes. It seems unlikely; that corn that is badly blighted now and only in the pollinating or milk stage, will develop into a normal crop unless it is sprayed several times with a fungicide. The experiences of last year show how quickly the blight can kill a corn plant; the big difference is that it is hitting two to three weeks earlier this year.

To Beware Of Silo Gas

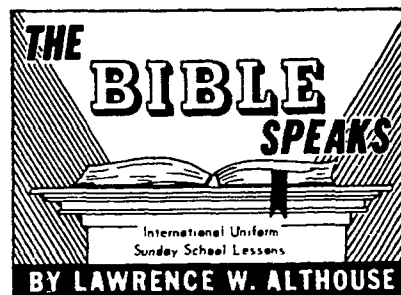
Silo filling time might be getting close for some growers. The danger of silo gas should be impressed upon every member of the farm family. From the time the silo is filled, or being filled, the danger may exist for at least

10 days. Some of the gases are yellow and some are colorless; they are all heavier than air and dangerous. Never enter a partly filled silo until the blower has been running for at least 10 to 15 minutes. All farmers and custom silo fillers should remind all members of the farm family of this danger. A small amount of some of these gases can do permanent damage to lung tissues. Be careful.

To Prepare For Winter Grain

The seeding of winter grain will soon get started on some farms; we urge the use of Certified seed sowed into ground that has been limed and fertilized according to a complete soil test. Lime and fertilizer work together to give the most efficient yields. Livestock producers wanting to sow winter grain early for pasture purposes can do this job during August and September, providing they use fly resistant wheat varieties such as Redcoat. Winter rye may be seeded at any time and will provide pasture until the ground freezes this fall and again early next spring. Frosty conditions do not make the winter grains dangerous from a toxicity angle as is the case with forage crops such as sudan grass or the sudan-sorghum hybrids.

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NO LAUGHING MATTER

Lesson for August 15, 1971

Background Scripture Jeremiah 35 1-10, 18, 19, Ephesians 5 15 20
Devotional Reading Luke 1 5 17

In our society the drunk is often represented or regarded as a most amusing fellow. Frequently the "hilarious" drunk is regarded as "the life of the party" and many well-known comedians have a "drunk" routine as part of their repertoire.



For the family of a drunk, however, alcoholism is no laughing matter. The drunken "life-of-the-party" is usually the sorrow of the home. His or her antics which some may find so amusing are for husbands, wives, and children a source of heart-rending tragedy.

The family curse

Several years ago a woman wrote a letter to a nationally-known columnist. The letter began: "I am the happiest woman in the world. My husband died last month. He finally drank himself to death." She went on to explain that her children no longer had to ask her why their father is "so mean," nor did she need to lock them and herself in the bathroom for protection. Her twelve-year-old, she said, no longer had

to help put to bed a drunken father and there were now no more liquor bills, jail fines, and attorney's fees. She signed her name, "Free At Last."

Her drunken husband was not a laughing matter.

Those who continue to regard the alcoholic and problem drinker as "amusing" ought to try putting themselves in the places of the families cursed by alcoholism. They ought to consider soberly the tragic statistics: three out of four broken homes list alcohol as a major factor; three out of ten fatal accidents involve a drinking driver, eleven thousand people killed each year by drunken drivers, one of every four emotionally disturbed persons is a problem drinker.

Mrs. Marty Mann, former executive director of the National Committee on Alcoholism, has said that the most painful years of her life were the years of chronic alcoholism. "I suffered constantly," she said, "not just one kind of pain, but all kinds of pain I suffered physically, mentally, emotionally, financially, and socially — in every department of my life. I tell you honestly that alcoholism is the most painful disease known to man."

The powerful witness of a few

In Jeremiah 35 the prophet is called by God to try to entice the Rechabites to break their vow of abstinence on alcohol. This was a small group of sincere men who supported the prophets in their condemnation of pagan worship by the Jews. One of their vows was to abstain from alcohol and so, though tempted, they reply: "We will drink no wine . . ." (35: 6).

We must admire (and emulate) the courage of this little band of men who regarded drunkenness as no laughing matter.

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