

On Harvesting Blighted Corn

Blighted corn presents quite a management challenge for farmers.

The presence of blight completely changes values and relationships with which the farmer has worked for many years.

When and if blight strikes, the challenge is to keep losses to a minimum and attempt to salvage as much feed value from the crop as possible. But since no one can predict ahead of time just how fast the blight will work and how much damage it will cause, determining what to do is at best very difficult. Still, the farmer must make important decisions; even the decision not to do anything is still a decision and represents one of the choices available.

While many farmers have sprayed their blighted corn, we suspect that the great majority of the approximately 150,000 acres of corn in Lancaster County and similarly large amounts in neighboring counties is being handled in one of two basic ways: either nothing is done and the farmer hopes that the blight won't be too severe, or the farmer attempts to harvest the corn, particularly the most severely blighted corn, as silage.

Probably harvesting as silage will do more than any other single thing to minimize blight losses in Southeastern Pennsylvania this year. Many fields of corn which otherwise would have been a total or nearly total loss if allowed to mature for grain will be ensiled with very little or only partial loss.

In harvesting blighted corn as silage, the individual farmer should remain aware that he has considerable leeway in determining just how much feed value he will get from the corn.

Research by Penn State University shows for instance, that corn which is harvested as silage 10 days prior to the silk stage will net the farmer only 2,000 pounds of TDN (Total Digestible Nutrients) per acre. But corn which is kept in the field longer and harvested at the dent to early glaze stage will net the farmer 8,300 pounds of TDN per acre. Actually, we know that many local farmers get much higher TDN yields per acre, indicating that the value of allowing the crop to mature as much as possible can be much greater than even these figures indicate.

The Penn State research also showed that simply allowing the crop to mature from the milk to the previously noted dent to early glaze stage can result in more than a 50 per cent increase in TDN per acre. In the milk stage, the crop will yield 5,300 TDN per acre, while in the dent to early glaze stage the figure jumps to 8,300 TDN per acre.

This research strongly underscores the importance of allowing the crop to mature as much as possible. We are informed that when farmers see blight attacking their crop, the typical reaction is to harvest the crop for silage immediately. The impulse to harvest should be restrained.

Right Food Helps Pretty Girls

Many teenagers believe that looks are an external matter, that they can't influence their appearance from the inside. But this isn't true, says Mrs. Ruth J. Buck, Penn State Extension foods and nutrition specialist.

The benefits of good health, such as attractive hair, skin, eyes and figure, come in part from food.

It is much easier and less expensive for a teenage girl to fix her hair attractively if it has a natural sheen and springiness,

When blight strikes, it often will kill the lower half or even the lower three quarters of the plant leaves, or only partially kill the leaves on the plant. But with even just a few leaves or parts of leaves still alive, the plant often can continue to grow. This continued growth is particularly important in developing the ear, which is the source of a major portion of the feed value of the plant.

Nature has provided for most plants, including corn, to reproduce under very unfavorable conditions; the ear often will continue to develop even though the plant may seem to be mostly dead.

Besides getting the most growth possible out of the plant, the farmer should pay close attention to the average moisture content of his silage when it is put into the silo. Most figures we see indicate an overall moisture content of about 65 per cent is desirable. Silage with a content much higher than this will cause drainage problems and a moisture content appreciably lower can result in mold problems.

But farmers should remember that the majority of corn weight is in the stalk and ears. When blight strikes, the leaves often die, but the ears and stalk may continue to have a very high moisture content, particularly if there are a few leaves still alive for many days afterwards. This means that a field which looks dead could still have too high a moisture level for proper making of silage.

Some reports we have seen indicate that if the farmer errs in timing of his silage making, particularly in regard to blighted silage, he should err in the direction of making it too dry. If it gets too dry, however, he should add water when it is put into the silo to bring it to the 65 per cent level.

One factor which may compel the farmer to harvest earlier, even harvest at a stage when the silage has too much moisture, is the presence of rot, which can become severe with blight. If rot begins to seriously deteriorate the quality of the stalk and ear, the farmer may feel compelled to harvest early, even though the field is not properly dried.

Farmers who have silo space should, of course, ensile their most severely blighted corn. This may mean ensiling some fields which had been planned for grain and allowing some fields intended for silage to become grain.

We expect that many farmers who did spray will find that it was highly profitable. While spraying increases the cost of their crop, the additional crop yield made possible may be several times greater than the cost.

The blight forced farmers to make many important management decisions this year. The combination of the decisions — all the way from purchase of seed through harvest — that were made in relation to the blight will be among the most important factors in determining how well the individual farmer succeeds this year.

points out Mrs. Buck. And the food she eats can influence the condition of her hair, as well as her skin, weight and figure.

According to studies done on this matter, teenagers need to choose foods more thoughtfully. Nutritionists have developed simple guides to make food selection easier. One guide puts the key foods in four main groups — milk, vegetable-fruit, bread-cereal, and meat.

Teenagers can get a good nutritional foundation by choosing specified amounts of food from each group, explains Mrs. Buck. They can then use additional foods to round out their meals and meet their individual need for food energy.

The number of combinations of foods that can be eaten is unlimited. And by choosing the right combinations to meet individual needs, teenagers will also be in better physical condition to resist diseases.

Health is more than just not being sick. Teenagers can seriously shortchange themselves nutritionally without being sick, points out Mrs. Buck. They can limit their ability to work and play.

And the experts are not guessing. Carefully planned studies conducted over extended periods have proven that there is a relationship between good eating and good health.

NOW IS THE TIME . . .

By Max Smith
Lancaster County Agent



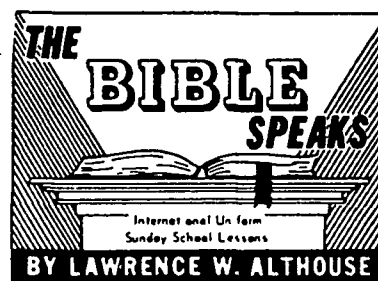
To Pack Horizontal Silos
The use of trench or other above-the-ground silos this fall may be quite common due to the large amount of corn that will do better when made into silage. There is little reason why good quality silage may not be made into this type of storage providing several practices are followed. The silage should be chopped fine and packed solid in the least amount of time between the first and the last load. Seal out the air with plastic covers and keep adjusting the plastic as the silage settles. Good drainage away from the silage is also important. All youngsters and all livestock should be kept off of the top of the silo, place old tires or chopped weeds on top of the plastic to keep it tight against the surface of the silage at all points. Many tons of good silage have been made in horizontal structures, but it does require better management to keep it from spoiling.

To Prepare For Winter Oats
Farmers who are planning to sow winter oats in this part of the state should be getting their ground ready for mid-September is the proper time to plant winter oats. The ground should be well drained and limed and fertilized according to a complete soil test. The main problem with winter oats production has been winter killing; this is the

reason we suggest mid-September planting on well drained soils. If the crop does not winter-kill, many farmers have gotten over 100 bushel of oats per acre. According to the 1971 Agronomy Guide, Norline continues to be one of the recommended varieties to plant.

To Evaluate Alfalfa-Growing Practices

Some growers in other parts of our country are getting about double the tonnage from alfalfa as we do here in Southeastern Pennsylvania. There must be reasons for this and it could be improper management. I'd like to repeat the need for more attention to the timing of the last cutting this fall. We are informed by research workers that the September cutting should be from 25 to 50 per cent in bloom and that we should permit time for some growth (6 to 8 inches) before a killing frost. Most experiments show damage to the roots if the last cutting is removed just before cold weather. I'd like to suggest that the September cutting be made by the middle of the month and on stands that are out in blossom as mentioned. If they are not into that stage of maturity by mid-September, then allow them to stand for winter protection. Fields high in fertility will show less winter killing and retain good stands longer than those that are not kept well limed and fertilized.



INCOMPARABLE GOD
Lesson for September 12, 1971

Background Scripture: Exodus 33:12-23, Job 11:7-9, 37:23-24, Isaiah 40:18-26, Romans 11:33-36
Devotional Reading: Psalms 86:8-13

A little girl was working determinedly with a piece of paper and some crayons "What are you drawing?" asked her grandfather. Without stopping to look up, she replied, "I'm drawing a picture of God." Amused, her grand-



father said, "But we don't know what God looks like." Snapped the little girl: "We will when I'm finished!"

Many people are somewhat like that little girl: they are very confident that their concept of God is entirely adequate and complete. Yet, though the Bible does tell us much about the nature of God, it also suggests that after we have said all that we can say about God, there is always more that lies beyond our knowledge.

The "otherness" of God

The Hebrews, though they frequently spoke of God in terms that made him seem very much like a man, also acknowledged that there was an "otherness" about him. God was always more than a man could experience of him. They might speak to him as if he were a man, they might

think of him in human terms, but they were quite aware that God's nature always far transcended their own.

This "difference" between man and God they regarded with great reverence. Because of it they avoided speaking the name of God, for it was considered too sacred to utter. In Exodus, furthermore, we find God saying: "But you cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live" (33:20). To see God so clearly, so completely, it was thought, would be a fatal experience. The "otherness" of God is too grand, too terrible for the mind of man to behold.

What likeness of God?

"To whom, then, will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?" (40:18). The Hebrews were constantly tempted to make idols to represent the divine realities. Ridiculing these finite deities, Isaiah says "he seeks out a skillful craftsman to set up an image that will not move" (40:20b). How can a man worship such a finite god, the prophet wants to know? We must worship something or Someone who is much more than we are or can ever be.

The Bible thus tells us not only that men have always celebrated their knowledge of God, but also that they have celebrated the reality that there is always so much more to God than we can ever know. We are inspired by a God whose meaning is not exhausted by our limited minds. As Paul puts it: "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways" (Romans 11:33).

Man needs an incomparable God.

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