

Some Trends in Farming

Looking through our mail recently, we noticed that some things have been changing over the past year.

For instance, a year ago, farmers were in the midst of a rising cost situation which included very high feed costs. At the same time, livestock prices were down. The combination was putting a severe squeeze on many farmers.

Now, farmers are facing the pleasant prospect of lower feed costs and relatively high livestock prices. It's the kind of situation which is easy to live with.

But farmers know from experience not to get carried away with delight when things look good. We note, for instance, the continual increase in the price of feeder cattle. We think some farmers should begin to ask themselves what might happen if they pay high prices for feeder stock and the market drops.

Our reports indicate that a buildup of livestock numbers has been taking place. Sooner or later this should result in pressure on prices. We suspect that these pressures will be delayed because of the pickup in the general economy which will spur demand. This pickup in demand could keep livestock prices high for many months longer than some forecasts are indicating.

But we also notice some reports on the consumer side complaining about record high retail meat prices. Farmers should remain alert to pressures in this direction.

It seems that some of our so-called friends who complain the loudest when the farmer is getting squeezed economically also complain the loudest when things are going a little better and the farmer is making some money.

The one dark spot in the farm picture continues to be the egg industry. Spurred on by the very high egg prices in late 1969 and early 1970, the industry went on an expansionary binge which was certain to result in disaster. The disaster has been on a scale which was to be expected. Some forecasts are now indicating that things may begin to pick up in the second half of 1972, but this is far from certain. The industry as a whole still has not made the determination to make the small percentage of cutback in production which is necessary to bring prices up.

Reports from local industry men suggest that reduced mortality from control of Merek's has probably played a much bigger role in the length of the price depression than was previously suspected. It seems that Merek's not only took a big toll in terms of bird losses, but also in terms of reduced rate of lay and high rate of losses through cracks and egg shell damage. Solving the Merek's problem in the midst of the price depression meant that a much sharper cutback in numbers of birds had to be made than would ordinarily be necessary to stop a market glut. The cutback wasn't quite big enough and solving the Merek's problem may have been the biggest reason.

Unlike egg producers, pork producers responded very rapidly in 1971 to a market glut. The result was that below cost of

production prices for pork lasted only a short time. With pork producers generally indicating continued restraint, the immediate outlook for hog producers is very good.

Milk prices? Well, that's a tough one. Our reports indicate that there's some over-production, which in the short run should indicate a larger percentage of milk diverted into class II uses and a lower blend price for producers. If this over-production continues too long, there will be pressures on prices, too.

But the national war chest for milk promotion is growing by leaps and bounds and should continue to grow. If promotion is as successful as its proponents expect, promotion should soon begin to make progress toward at least reducing the rate of decline in per capita milk consumption—and hopefully bring increases.

Statewide, out bet, despite assurances to the contrary from Harrisburg, is that elimination of retail milk price setting will benefit consumers at the expense of the farmer. The farmer may not suffer immediately if Milk Control is eliminated, but out guess is that retailers won't take significantly reduced profit margins long without squeezing the farmer.

We also notice indications that the farm community will come under increasing pressures on quality control and chemical use. This includes stiffer regulations on use of fertilizers, pesticides and various chemicals, including antibiotics. This type of thing will almost certainly lead to higher operating costs. Farmers should be aware of these trends and be prepared to readjust their thinking both in terms of the type of materials used and how they're applied. At the same time, it's important to keep an eye on the cost problem.

It's our observation that these types of pressures will force even greater specialization in farming for several reasons. For one, new rules and greater know-how in use of chemicals will require greater care and more knowhow, maybe special training.

It will be increasingly impossible for farmers to keep up with these new rules and requirements in several fields. It may be necessary to devote more attention to a smaller number of projects in order to get the job done right.

One alternative will be to turn over the worry and know-how involved with this type of thing to agri-business firms which can provide the service or to custom applicators which can be expected to grow in number and importance.

As always in farming, things are changing fast and an awareness of the direction of the changes is important.

Where There's Smoke

Smoking and matches rank as the number one cause of building fires, reports the National Fire Protection Association.

Make sure you have plenty of large ashtrays in your house. And don't smoke in bed, warns the Penn State University Cooperative Extension Service Farm and Home Safety Committee.

BLOOMSBURG, PA, PRESS "A leading journal for pharmacists, 'American Druggist' reports that 'make it do, use it up, do without' has become an outmoded philosophy. It has been replaced with the new view 'use it once and throw it away'. According to the publication, disposable products are often cheaper and healthier. It lists a number of such items and concludes, 'A disposable hairbrush is also under consideration.' This comes as a surprise. Looking at the shocking number of juvenile delinquency cases we had concluded that Momand Pop had disposed of the hairbrush about ten years ago."

NOW IS THE TIME . . .

By Max Smith
Lancaster County Agent



To Be Careful With Snowmobiles

Weather conditions have permitted the use of snowmobiles during the past week and we are aware of the disregard for private property in their use. I'd like to remind the owners of these pleasure vehicles that the permission of the land owner should be secured before the mobile is operated on that piece of land. Just how much damage a snowmobile does to a small grain field or to a permanent sod is not clearly known; however, other people do not have the right to drive over your land without permission. As these machines get more numerous and if snowfall permits their more extensive use, owners of these machines should be interested in running on land with the owner's permission; don't trespass and be liable for damages and injuries.

To Service Farm Machinery

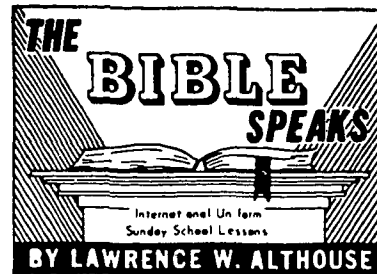
The spring months are approaching and when the weather permits many pieces of farm machinery will swing into action. It is good management to have every piece in good working condition in order to prevent costly delays. Now is the time to get the machinery serviced and ready. Many machinery dealers welcome the work during the winter months and may give some discounts. Farmers doing their own repairs will be able to spend more time and do a more thorough job if they can plan to do it when the pressure of outside work is not as great. Machinery is expensive and deserves being kept in good condition.

To Be Careful With Antibiotics

Again we remind all livestock producers that medicines and drugs used properly and carefully can render a great service; however, the trend may be toward the too extensive use of some of these materials and then a resistance is developed by the organism. Also, with the use of most drugs and medicines there is a regulation concerning the withholding period of milk flow, or certain length of time before being sold for slaughter. We urge that all producers recognize the importance of these regulations and follow them carefully. There are record blanks to be used for keeping accurate records of the administering of all types of drugs and medicines. We urge good record keeping in order to have some protection against a claim of mis-use.

To Pay By Check

When checks are used to pay expenses instead of paying cash, there is some record of the transaction. We are aware of the habit of some farmers paying cash for purchases rather than using their checking account. I think this is a doubtful practice and one that is not included in good farm record keeping and good farm management. Discounts may still be obtained by paying promptly by check as well as with cash. Permanent records of payments and contributions become more important with many new taxes and regulations. The check book and the resulting cancelled check gives the needed record of both small and large transactions.



CHRIST AND THE CITY

Lesson for February 6, 1972

Background Scripture Luke 13 31-35, 19 28-48
Devotional Reading Psalms 122

There is a painting by the French artist, Paul Hippolyte Flandrin, entitled "Christ Mourns over the City." It is, of course, an interpretation of Luke 13 31-35 and 19 28-28, two occasions when Christ expressed deep concern over the city of Jerusalem and its unreceptivity to God's messengers. The figure of Jesus dominates the whole right side of the painting. He stands looking over the city and, although we cannot see his face clearly, it is obvious that his head is bowed in sadness.



Rev. Althouse

Jesus weeps for the city

It is the left side of the painting that surprises, for we find that the sprawling expanse beneath Jesus is not Jerusalem, but one of our contemporary cities. It could be New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Los Angeles—it could be your town. There is, to be sure, a large cathedral or church in the center foreground, but it is dark; no light comes from it. The city itself is crowded, dingy, and wreathed in smoke. It is definitely a modern city.

The intent of the artist is plain. Christ still mourns over the city, he is saying, but not just Jerusalem. Christ mourns over all cities where ignorance, greed, and hatred have dimmed or extinguished the light of God. The two occasions in the gospel of Luke, then, are very relevant for today.

Today, as then, Jesus meets with the same response: "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" (19:39) People in the cities are just as hostile and resistant to the claims of the Gospel today as they were when Jesus mourned over Jerusalem. They don't want to hear prophets; they don't want to hear God's voice, they don't want to know what he wants of them. They are still violent in their response to God's spokesmen.

Jesus acts for the city

Once again, Jesus says to the cities, open your eyes, and weeps because there is so little response to his voice. The problem of the cities is the problem of man: his spiritual blindness. It is not that he cannot see, but that he will not.

Once again, the result is likely to be the same if you will not wake up and see, you will be destroyed. "because you did not know the time of your visitation" (9:44). So Jesus was not content to weep for the city; to make the people wake up and see he did the most significant thing he could do he gave his own life so that the city might know.

Once again this is what is required if our own cities are to escape their destruction. It will not be enough for us to weep and wring our hands over them. We must be willing, like him, to offer nothing less than ourselves.

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LANCASTER FARMING

Lancaster County's Own Farm Weekly

P O Box 266 - Lititz, Pa 17543
Office 22 E Main St., Lititz, Pa. 17543
Phone: Lancaster 394-3047 or Lititz 626-2191

Robert G. Campbell, Advertising Director
Zane Wilson, Managing Editor
Subscription price: \$2 per year in Lancaster County; \$3 elsewhere

Established November 4, 1955
Published every Saturday by Lancaster Farming, Lititz, Pa.
Second Class Postage paid at Lititz, Pa. 17543

Members of Newspapers Farm Editors Assn., Pa. Newspaper Publishers Association, and National Newspaper Association