



# Off the Sounding Board

By Sheila Miller, Editor

## Animal welfare issues leave farmers wringing hands

There's a worried whisper running through U.S. dairy and beef barns these days. It seems these cattle producers have gotten wind of a disturbing discussion that has been resounding through their neighbors' poultry and hog houses. What's causing all the flutter can be summed up in two words — animal welfarism.

Unfortunately, at this point, discussion is all that seems to be stirring in the farm community as it reacts to an ever-increasing threat to its very livelihood — the freedom to raise animals and continue to pay the mortgage with the income they produce.

Just last weekend, Lehigh County welcomed close to 200 people into its borders — a country rich in farm heritage and fertile land. There, at a local college campus, vegetarians and animal welfarists converged to plan their future strategy to wage a battle under the guise of 'Action for Life.'

All this plotting and planning took place right under the noses of farmers who boast an ever increasing productivity and advanced technology in their operations which allows more people to be fed with less labor and from fewer acres.

Were these vegetarians and animal rights schemers welcomed with picket lines of farmers demonstrating their opposition? Hardly. Even though the rains kept farmers from using field work as an excuse for not showing their sentiments, there was nary a picket line to be seen. Nor was anyone standing at the entrance handing out pro-farming flyers.

Some of the agricultural ranks did manage to infiltrate the meetings to keep an eye on what tactics were being developed by the consortium of vegetarians and animal groups. At least these 'spying' missions will aid farmers in planning a desperate defense as a last resort.

But in that lies the

problem. Why should we wait until our backs are to the wall to strike out at the attackers? Perhaps it's more the style of union workers or college students to wave protest signs to gain attention for a cause, but soon farmers will have to start combatting the animal welfare rhetoric that's being listened to by legislators. Or, we'll have to live with the consequences. That old saying about the squeaky wheel has been proven true many times before this issue was ever dreamed up.

Poultry producers have recognized the early warning flags signaling rough weather and sailing ahead and have taken steps to batten down their houses to be ready when the first waves of animal welfare issues hit. A handbook on handling and housing chickens spells out for each producer what constitutes proper management. The poultry producers are hoping this suffices in assuaging the animal welfarists' zealous attempts to make life 'ducky' for layers.

Some poultry scientists throw up their hands when it comes to discussing animal welfarism and, like Penn State's Ken Goodwin, call it a "no win situation."

In talking to egg producers at the recent Pennsylvania Poultry Federation Conference, Goodwin warned that the animal welfare movement is "gaining momentum." He commented the issue serves as an "umbrella for curious bedfellows", referring to the vegetarians linking up with the animal organizations, and that these people have pigs, poultry and veal as a target.

Goodwin cited examples of what the welfarists feel is a chicken's rights:

"They must be able to easily get up and lie down, turn and stretch, groom and preen, and interact socially with their own species," he remarked — drawing murmured chuckles from the farm audience. Goodwin added the welfarists are adamant against wire floor

cages and over crowding, along with debeaking, dubbing, force molting, catching and shipping methods, and slaughtering techniques. And the list goes on.

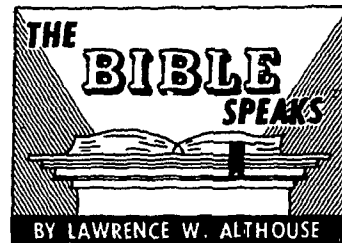
Goodwin quipped, "To say broilers are bored is extreme anthropomorphism. And over feeding. . . we're not raising show dogs!" He continued by stating those who speak for animal welfarism speak with emotionalism relating their experiences with pet animals not farm animals.

Goodwin implored the industry to "insist on discussions on the welfare of animals, not their rights which is strictly a human experience." He emphasized any shift away from present production practices would mean economic change and an ultimate price increase to consumers.

The poultry scientist challenged producers to meet "reckless claims head on" and for the various industries to police their own ranks. "Animal welfare ethics codes should be developed from within the industry rather than through legislation based on emotionalism."

We have to agree with Goodwin's analysis of the times we're living in and the difficulty of evaluating them. The agricultural revolution released 95 percent of the people from the tasks of eeking out a living on the farm. Those who stayed in the profession continue to provide safe, cheap, quality food. Those who produce and those who consume are separated by a gap that makes the void between generations seem like a stone's throw, even though they may be 'next-door' neighbors sharing country life.

Goodwin predicts the outcome of the animal welfare issue is in the hands of the nonfarmers of the U.S. If that's true, it's only because U.S. farmers were sitting on theirs.



PROLONGING THE DAYS  
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Background Scripture:

Deuteronomy 6:1-15.

Devotional Reading

Jeremiah 23:29-35.

From the long perspective of history we can see that it was never really a question of IF the people of Israel would possess the promised land of Canaan, but HOW LONG they would be able to stay there. God had promised this land to them and he would keep his promise, but for the people to retain this land, they would have to do certain things—and that's where the uncertainty lay. Their tenure in the promised land was never a question of God's faithfulness to his promise, but of Israel's faithfulness to theirs.

Your Son and Son's Son

The people of Israel would continue to possess the promised land so long as they kept "the statutes and the ordinances which the Lord your God commanded me to teach you . . ." (Deut. 6:1). Therefore the key to their longevity there would depend, not only upon their faithfulness, but their diligence in passing on the faith to the generations that followed. Israel's perpetuity depended on a faith that passed from "you" to "your son and your son's son."

That is WHAT they had to do, but now we come to the hard part, the HOW. For isn't that the problem

that still faces us today? How can we pass on our religious heritage to our children and the generations that will follow? Even more, how can we do this in an age when our children seem to have lost interest in our churches at best, or utterly reject them at worst? Isn't it a hopeless task?

Someone has said that "there are no hopeless situations, only people who have become hopeless about them," and perhaps that's true when we face the "youth situation" in our churches today. In fact, Deuteronomy reminds us that the first step in meeting that challenge is to remember once again that we have a God-given commandment to pass on the faith to our children—no matter how hard or impossible it may seem. Perhaps once or twice a month we ought to read again the commandments as Deuteronomy puts it: "And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." (Deut. 6:7)

Our Doorposts and Gates

At first glance, this seems an overwhelming task, but when we look more closely, we find that the methodology of HOW is implicit in the challenge. How can we teach these things to our children? Answer: by keeping them constantly before them and surrounding our lives with them in everything we do. Our children may come to that point where they are no longer impressed by our words; but if they see that our lives are filled, not with talk about God, but actions that proclaim his lordship, they will more likely respect the religion we profess and our days in the promised land will be prolonged.

## OUR READERS WRITE, AND OTHER OPINIONS

### What about ear corn prices?

I wish to register my objection to your recent dropping of the corn prices, on the cob, that you ran on a regional basis.

I know that farming is big business, but there are lot of small farmers, myself for one, who would use that as a gauge when selling my ear corn.

Is there any reason that this was dropped?

John Stoffa, Bethlehem, PA

Editor's reply.

Mr. Stoffa, we checked back into our past issues and have not found the ear corn quotes to be missing from our Pa. Grain market report, found on A6 and supplied by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. Also, the various local hay and grain markets quoted on the same page provide ear corn prices when they are available.

## NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

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**To Control Canada Thistles**  
Canada thistles are listed as a noxious weed in Pennsylvania; this means they should be controlled and not allowed to go to seed. Too often we see what some people call "summer snow flakes" floating through the air; these are not snow flakes but thistle seeds. We should insist that these be mowed or sprayed to prevent seed information.

Most townships have noxious weed ordinances to prevent the

spread, from farm to farm, of Canada thistles and other noxious weeds. These ordinances should be enforced for the best interest of all farmers. You can spot spray with Banvel for control. Be sure to follow all label instructions. We urge everyone to do something about this problem.

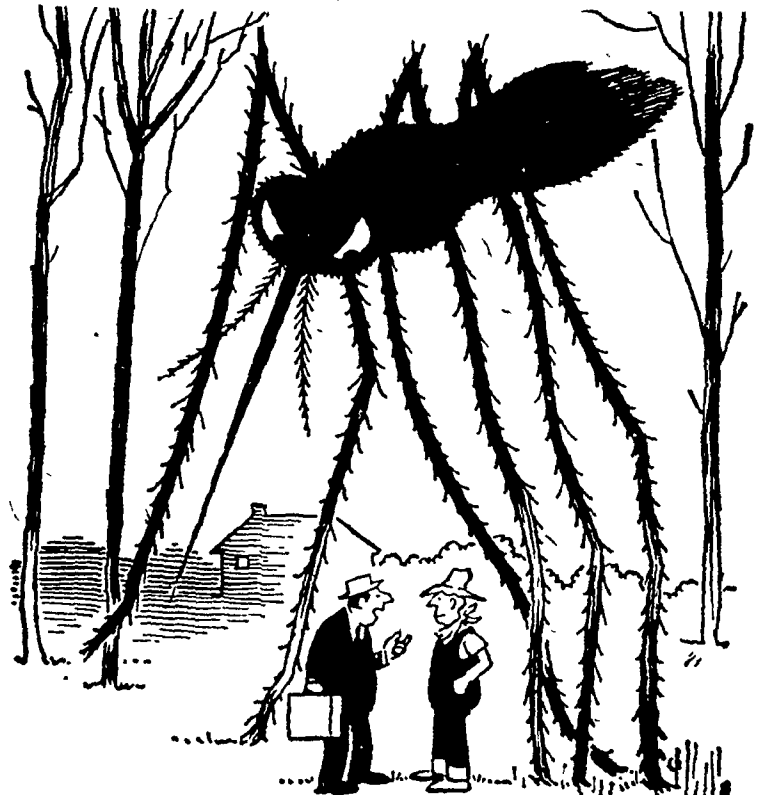
**To Protect Fat Tests and Appetites**

—Summertime is a difficult time to keep cows eating and testing well. Glenn Shirk, Dairy Agent, offers these suggestions. Feed

more long, dry forages, especially if a lot of high moisture, finely chopped forages and grain are being fed. At least 1/3 of the ration dry matter should come from forages and the fiber level of the total ration should be at least 17%. Increase the fiber level of the grain mix by feeding ear corn, oats, bran, beet pulp, etc. Avoid grains that are heat processed, finely ground or pelleted.

Feed grain more frequently or  
(Turn to Page A12)

## HAY HAWS



"How did you make out with that new pesticide that I recommended you try?"