



Off the Sounding Board

By Sheila Miller, Editor

Who pays in the end?

A snow storm in June?
That has been the prediction recently by people who don't come under the title of weather forecasters.

What they're predicting isn't a flurry of white flakes from the sky but white, downy seeds floating through the air. This phenomena, which has grown in magnitude over the past ten years, occurs when one of the most troublesome weeds confronting Pennsylvania's farmers bursts its reproductive pods.

Canada thistle — long the scourge of croplands — has cost farmers thousands upon thousands of "war" dollars each year as they battle to keep this noxious weed under control. But it seems these agricultural soldiers are experiencing a set-back in this year's battle since the state's Department of Transportation has temporarily defected to the enemy's side.

What's happened to cause PennDOT to switch its allegiance from farmers to weeds? Gypsy moths

Not only are these winged invaders capturing most of the public press's attention, they're monopolizing every helicopter applicator's time. The state's Department of Environmental Resources has lined up all the available applicators for their spraying program, leaving none for PennDOT.

What does PennDOT's lack of helicopter applicators have to do with Canada thistle control? According to PennDOT's Bob Ross, chief of Roadside Environmental Division of the Bureau of Maintenance, these whirlybirds have been the means used by the Department to launch an aerial attack on the noxious weeds since 1980.

That was the year PennDOT realized it had to do something about the increasing Canada thistle infestation along its highways and began an "experimental" aerial control program — a first in the U.S., said Ross.

But this year the same helicopters that took care of the herbicide applications are busy spraying the winged woodland invaders — too busy to be bothered with the early-May application of Asulox to control the thistle.

So, the PennDOT control program has to be delayed for a year. The alternative of land application is not feasible, said Ross, because of the added cost of dragging hoses along highway right-of-ways and around trees. And, besides, it would be too late to spray the thistle effectively by the time the department's program could be switched from aerial application to land — too much red tape.

But, Ross was optimistic that the previous two year spraying program had suppressed some of the thistles, and that the carryover would help to limit the spread this year.

That's tough luck for farmers whose fields are adjacent to limited-access highways because even a reduced population of Canada thistle is a threat to crops.

But, according to Ross, the Canada thistles found on PennDOT right-of-ways didn't originate there. He claims the thistle took refuge on the uncultivated roadsides after

traveling from infested farmland. Proof of this, he says, is the fact that no Canada thistle are found along woodland areas of the right-of-ways.

Debating which area had Canada thistle first, the roadside or the cropland, makes about as much sense as the chicken or the egg controversy. The fact remains that soon these weeds will reach their reproductive prime and will be casting new troops to the wind. Croplands, pastures, lawns, roadsides — none are considered non-combat zones by the enemy.

Since PennDOT's aerial applications have fallen through, what about cooperating with farmers in a spraying program and cost-sharing herbicide treatment in fields along highways? Last year the agency spent \$787,000 on herbicides in their maintenance program. Although some of these funds went for weed control other than Canada thistle, even half that amount would help pay for spraying thousands of cropland acres now while the thistle is still vulnerable.

One thing farmers and PennDOT have in common is the recently signed Noxious Weed law. This law provides for the Secretary of Agriculture, on his own motion or upon the request of any interested person, to hold public hearings to consider the designation of a weed control area.

A spokesman for the Department of Agriculture noted regulations for the Noxious Weed law haven't been written and may take months to be finalized. However, he stated "it's a good assumption" that when the regulations are completed, PennDOT will be required to comply with the state law.

In the meantime, one local township in Lancaster County decided to do something about the state's responsibility to control Canada thistle. Last Monday, the Manheim Township commissioners unanimously approved a resolution specifically requesting PennDOT to control the noxious weed along its limited access right-of-ways in the township.

Lancaster County Commissioner James Huber announced a similar resolution is going to be discussed next Tuesday, although he noted the county has no weed ordinances to regulate the state. He said controlling traditional weed problems falls on the shoulders of township and state governments.

The old law of the "squeaking wheel gets the grease" should have some impact on PennDOT's next strategy in the thistle war. Since they, along with farmers, will be forced to comply with the stringent weed control requirements of the Noxious Weed law, it makes sense for PennDOT to chip in dollars to help keep the thistles from gaining a new stronghold.

This year's new weed communities could be the source of next year's reinfestation. Rather than tuning out the farmers' pleas for help, PennDOT needs to listen closely where the "squeaks" are coming from. Any way they analyze it, they'll pay for the June snowstorm in the end.

A man sat smiling broadly and nodding his head as his Sunday school teacher read from the Book of Revelation. At last, every eye in the class turned to him, he explained: "Wonderful! Wonderful! Wonderful! It makes life worthwhile for me to know that in the end, they'll get what's coming to them!"

In parts, at least, his reaction is understandable. For the Book of Revelation does assure us that ultimately the world will experience the judgement of God and the picture painted by John is awesome to say the least. But the smiling, nodding man missed the

most important meanings of Revelation's message.

THE BEAST CAPTURED

For one thing, John's Revelation warns us that God's judgement will ultimately come to all of us. To look eagerly for Judgement Day so that our foes will get their comeuppance is a dangerous preoccupation. Everything and everyone will fall under God's judgement. True, John reminds us that the Judgement will include the "kings of the earth", whose wielders of seemingly unlimited temporal power. They will stand on no higher ground on the Day of

(Turn to Page A12)

NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

Lancaster County Agriculture Agent
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To Keep Livestock Comfortable
The hot weather season is here. When we have both high temperature and high humidity, livestock suffer similar to human beings. In the case of fattening animals that are nearing market finish, this stress can be very severe. I would suggest that maximum ventilation of the building be used. If you do not have fans, then open all doors and windows to get cross-ventilation.

In some cases, circulating fans may be used to move the air over the animals. Some hog finishing houses are equipped with water sprinklers or fogging devices, that keep the floor and hogs wet during peak hours of heat and humidity. Animals that are outside should have free access to shade and water. Attention to the comfort of animals will reduce stress and possibly some losses.

To Be Aware of Corn Insects

With an increased trend toward no-till corn planting or minimum tillage, we can expect more problems with corn insects. Past experience shows this. We urge corn growers to inspect your fields frequently to observe any feeding on small plants. We can have

cutworms, stalk borers and armyworms at any time feeding on the corn plants. The cutworms and armyworms may be controlled with sprays of Sevin, Dylox and Diazinon.

The stalk borer is very difficult to control because they work inside the corn stalk. Flea Beetles are another insect that may feed on small corn leaves; they create small holes in the leaves but seldom do extensive damage. Sevin can be used to eliminate these small insects, if it is a serious infestation. Keep an eye on the corn field for the first several weeks and avoid serious insect injury.

To Check Weed Sprayers

The sprayer is a piece of equipment that is used quite heavily from spring till fall. Many complaints of poor chemical performance can be traced to poor sprayer performance. This is often due to poor calibration. Calibration simply means to apply a known amount of spray mixture to a known area.

There are several methods used to calibrate a sprayer. The simplest is to travel over a selected

(Turn to Page A12)

Farm Calendar



Saturday, May 22

Delaware Dairy Goat Association First Spring Show, Harrington Fairgrounds, continues tomorrow.

Greene County Sheep & Wool Field Day, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., fairgrounds at Waynesburg.

Sunday, May 23

Heart of Penn Goat Club management workshop and family picnic, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Wolf's Crossroad Picnic Grove, Sunbury.

Monday, May 24

Pa. Dairy Fieldmen's Conference,

Penn State.

Tuesday, May 25

Ephrata Area Adult Farmer manure storage and handling tour, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., meet at Ephrata Junior High School parking lot, no charge, no pre-registration.

Wednesday, May 26

Pa. State Council of Farm Organizations legislative breakfast, 8-9:30 a.m., Villa Leo Restaurant, Exit 18A off I-83 or Exit 18 off Pa. Turnpike.

(Turn to Page A12)

HAY HAWS



"I'd like something that'll make these lousy weeds suffer before they die!"

THE BIBLE SPEAKS
BY LAWRENCE, W. ALTHOUSE
JUSTICE ATLAST!
May 23, 1982

Background Scripture:
Revelation 18 through 20
Devotional Reading:
Romans 15:1-6