



Off the Sounding Board

By Sheila Miller, Editor

Assisting ag's rebirth

It's been a long nine months since the artificial inseminator visited the farm to breed your best cow. Inside your pedigreed bovine grows your hope for a better future — a calf by one of the top bulls of the breed.

The best way to describe this particular cow's gestation is "pampered" ever since the day the vet was out to pregnancy check the herd. It was hard to hide your excitement when your hopes were confirmed and the cow was proclaimed safe in calf.

Now it's almost time. She's due today, and it's a toss up on who's the most nervous about the approaching arrival — you or the cow.

As her labor begins to intensify, you watch with all the enthusiasm of a first-time father. Her water breaks and you anxiously await the presentation of those tiny, white hooves, praying that what will appear are front feet rather than breeched, back feet.

Time lags on and still no calf comes squeezing into the world. With each passing moment, your anxiety grows and questions flood your mind. Should I go in after the calf? Should I give the cow more time to deliver? Have I already waited too long?

Finally, with a groan, the cow pushes out the sight you've been waiting for — two glistening hooves. Without hesitation, you grasp hold of the calf, your promise for future success. Make-shifting binder twine and a stick for last-minute "obstetrical chains," you take the future into your own hands and put your heart and dreams into each assisted contraction.

As each minute passes like hours, you watch as slowly the calf's head emerges. Is it alive? That bluish tinge coloring its nose leaves a haunting doubt in your mind.

With one final, cooperative effort, both the cow and you concentrate on freeing the calf from the trauma of birth. Then, with a surge, all your waiting and watching pays off as a perfect heifer calf lies quietly on its straw bed. You watch proudly as life-giving oxygen rushes into her lungs and turns that starved, blue hue into healthy pink.

Success stories such as this one happen every day on the thousands of farms throughout the country — not only on dairy farms but in any kind of livestock enterprise. The phenomenon of birth is as natural to most farmers as eating or sleeping. And yet each time a cow calves or a sow farrows, there's a crucial decision-making process on which hinges success or failure.

Much like the gestation of a calf, success in the form of profitability on the farm, is a long-awaited occurrence. Much planning and care and planning goes into each phase of this risky occupation — not to mention considerable financial investments.

As farmers, we grasp and grapple with each new opportunity to improve our lots, hoping it won't "die" in the final stage. We rejoice at a hay crop that escapes the rain and is safely stacked away in the barn, or the corn crop that evades the damages of hail or drought to yield record bushels per acre, or the future "champion" livestock that grow their ways

into "winner's circles," whether in the show ring or auction barn.

Farmers, like those in the dairy, swine, poultry, and fruit industries, readily recognize the need to roll up their shirt sleeves to assist in the "birth" of a profitable, productive industry. Referendums, advertising checkoffs, acreage reductions, all are tools we use to help assure our financial futures in an unpredictable marketplace.

Today's farmers go one step further in trying to breathe life into what would seem to others to be a faltering agricultural heartbeat. Unlike the laboring cow who can't ask for help, farmers have been picking up their telephones and writing letters to legislators both on the national and state levels. We share our stories of success and failure and hope these policymakers will recognize our plea for help.

Just recently nearly 2 million farmers took part in the Agriculture Council of America's 12-hour National Hearing on the Farm Economy. During that time, about 2,000 farmers from across the U.S. were able to call Washington and speak to members of Congress, Executive Branch officials, congressional aides, and farm-group representatives.

According to ACA, the predominant concerns voiced by the callers were: high interest rates, and U.S. trade policy and performance.

"We are more than delighted with the response of both policymakers and the agricultural community," said ACA President Allen Paul.

"This is exactly what we wanted — to dramatize to those who can make a difference the plight of agriculture today, with net farm income plunging below the levels recorded during the Depression.

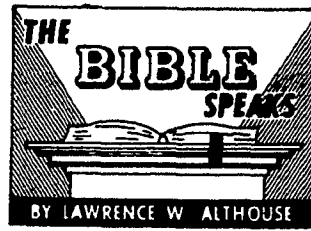
"Perhaps now, policymakers and opinion leaders will be fully conscious that agriculture, just as housing, auto, and other major industries, is in serious trouble and needs rapid, meaningful attention."

Low commodity prices, the 1980 grain embargo, overproduction, inadequate price supports, and the federal budget deficit were also cited by these farmers as reasons why 75 percent of them viewed their economic futures negatively in the recent survey.

To solve these current economic problems on the farm about 54 percent of the callers asked for temporary assistance to prevent defaults on outstanding farm debt. And 81 percent thought price support rates should be increased, calling for hikes of more than 20 percent.

As we celebrate June Dairy Month, we realize the challenges facing farmers today and in the future, both economically and productively. We have faith that through self-help efforts like voluntary check-offs and curbed production we will be able to work with national and state leaders and breathe new life into agriculture.

Like the wobbly calf, agriculture needs to be nurtured both internally and externally to gain the strength and will it needs to survive.



A STRANGE KIND OF FAVOR

June 6, 1982

Background Scripture:

Luke 1-2;
John 2:1-12;
19:25b-27.

Devotional Reading:

John 2:1-12.

It seems to me that, if Roman Catholics have often made too much of Jesus' mother, Mary, so, too, Protestants have generally made too little of her. There are lots of Protestant churches named for St. Paul, St. Peter, St. Thomas, St. John, and St. James, but I have never encountered one named for Mary, the mother of Jesus.

I find this very curious inasmuch as Mary shines as one of the most interesting and inspiring persons in the New Testament. Next to Jesus himself, there is no one as highly celebrated by the four evangelists: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb," exclaimed Elizabeth, her kinswoman.

She Was Greatly Troubled

The veneration given Mary by Roman Catholics has often had an effect similar to the one produced by Protestant indifference: Christians generally find it hard to identify with her. She is either set far above our human situation or ignored entirely. Yet there is a great deal that Mary can teach us about the living of our own lives.

Mary was, like us, a human being and therefore subject to all the concerns and limitations that

confront us. When confronted by the angel, Gabriel, we are told that she was "greatly troubled at the saying and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be." God was revealing to Mary that he had a plan and purpose for her life, and, like any of us, Mary's response was one of fear and self-doubt. Even after Mary accepted her role as the mother of Christ, there were times when doubt and misunderstanding took over. On one occasion, Mary and some of Jesus' brothers are convinced Jesus is "beside himself," and come, seeking to persuade him to stop and come home.

Handmaid of the Lord

But, if Mary's faith and understanding were sometimes as imperfect as ours, she had other traits that carried her beyond those limitations. For one thing, she was a woman who reflected on her experience. Confronted by Gabriel, Luke tells us she "considered in her mind" his message. Later, he tells us "Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart."

Secondly, even though she did not fully understand God's will for her, she committed herself to it. "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be me according to your word!" There are times in our lives when our understanding carries us as far as it can and then we must make the leap of commitment and submit ourselves to God's purpose.

"Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you." During the stormy days of Jesus' ministry and the last week in Jerusalem, Mary must have mused that it was a strange kind of "favor" God had bestowed on her. But Mary was to learn, as we must, that the "favor" of God often means a cross. It is only beyond the cross and the resurrection that the favor of God is seen in its true light.

Farm Calendar

- Saturday, June 5**
Annual Sheep Field Day & Performance Ram Sale, Allentown Fairgrounds
Mason-Dixon Polled Hereford Assn. field trip and annual meeting, Hagerstown, Md., continues tomorrow.
- Monday, June 5**
Hunterdon County, N.J. Sheep Breeders' Assn. meeting, Jim Eckrich's Spring Meadow Farm, Church Road, Holland Twp., 8 p.m.
Pa. Meat Packers Assn. spring meeting, Seaview Club, Absecon, N.J.
Northampton Wool Pool, 7 a.m. - 12 p.m., Northampton 4-H Center.
- Tuesday, June 8**
Cedar Crest Young Farmers banquet, 7 p.m., Schaefferstown Fire Hall.
- Wednesday, June 9**
York County Beekeepers meeting, 6:30 p.m., home of Quay
- Minnick, 156 Main St., Red Lion.
Lebanon County Farm-City awards breakfast, 8 a.m., Quality Inn.
- Thursday, June 10**
Killdeer Farms Holstein dispersal, 11 a.m., Guernsey Pavilion, Lancaster.
Pa. Beef Cook-off contest, Trinity High School, Shiremanstown.
Adams County Fruitgrowers meeting, 6:30 p.m., MacLott's Zepp Farm, Farm View Road, west of York Springs.
- Friday, June 11**
Delmarva Chicken Festival & Chicken Cooking Contest, Hog Neck Arena, Easton, Md., continues tomorrow.
PEMA meeting, 6:30 p.m., Sheraton-Conestoga, Lancaster.
- Saturday, June 12**
Berks Wool Pool, 7 a.m. - 3 p.m., Bollman's Hat Factory, Adamstown.

NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

Lancaster County Agriculture Agent
Phone 717-394-6851



To Be Alert For The Black Cutworm
We are in the black cutworm season. Just a reminder to keep a close check on all corn fields for the next few weeks. Damage symptoms will be plants cut off just above ground level. The

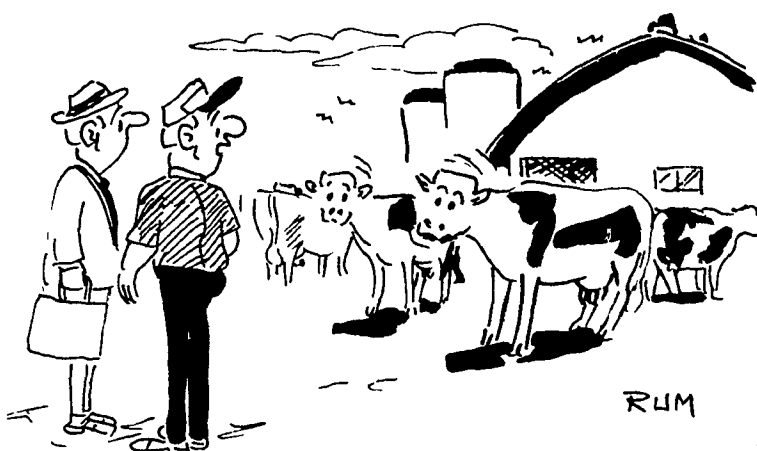
culprit will be hiding in the soil a few inches from the cut plant. We suggest a rescue treatment if 2-3% of the plants are cut and you can find more than 5 larvae per 100 plants.

Remember the black cutworm is the one with the granulated skin.

The control materials listed in the 1982 Agronomy Guide include Lorsban or Sevin or Parathion or Penncap or Diazinon or Dylox or Toxaphene. Note Toxaphene should not be used post-emergence

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HAY HAWS



"I have a system to keep going. When I run short of money I just sell another cow."