



# OPINION

## Think Again!

Now that the Massachusetts referendum related to animal rights has been defeated, it's easy to relax. Relax preparation for new attacks on our animal production methods. And relax on the research needed to make sure we provide the best possible accommodations for the livestock and poultry on our farms.

After eleven months of hard work and a cost of over half-million dollars by Massachusetts farmers, spearheaded by the Massachusetts Farm Bureau, we now know a lot more about what it takes to get the farm story across to the public. In this state referendum non-farm voters outnumbered farmers by about 1000 to one. Yet, even with these great odds against them, 450 farm families adopted state assemblymen—took them out to their farms and explained how well they care for their livestock. Steve Kopperud, executive director of Animal Industry Foundation, Arlington, VA, credits this grass roots efforts for the overwhelming 71 percent "no" vote. When people get first-hand facts about agriculture, they respond favorably.

And this need to give people who live in the city these facts continues to be needed everywhere in the country. Unfortunately, many farmers think the animal welfare issue will go away if we just don't talk about it. But if that's your thinking, think again.

When animal welfare people called the state farm bureau office after the vote, they offered congratulations and reported that legislation would be introduced in the state to accomplish what was defeated in the referendum. So, the conflict continues.

Dr. Richard Barczewski, extension agricultural agent, University of Delaware, said in his swine management column this week that the animal rights groups are determined to condemn intensive animal rearing. Some groups are against any animal agriculture altogether. "It's high time that we as an industry start to realize that the issue is not going to go away," Barczewski said.

We believe most farmers love their animals and give them proper housing and care. And it's important that they do the best job possible to raise and house their livestock so that the legitimate concerns of animal welfare are met. We know that like people, animals can adapt to many different living conditions and be comfortable. This shows through contentment and high production.

Through the new beef and pork checkoff programs, monies are available to conduct research into animal well-being. We need to be sure that this is accomplished. Then we'll have data to indicate by performance what housing conditions are best for each species. In animal welfare, as in any other issue, when the facts are known, and communicated, motions are more easily quieted.



## NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin  
Lancaster County Agriculture Agent

### To Check Barn Ventilation

Proper ventilation of all types of livestock and poultry buildings is very important during the winter months. When the warm, moisture-laden air is not moved out of the area, we usually see condensation on the windows, walls and ceilings. This is especially true with little or poor insulation. Exhaust fans will move air out and protect the building. This time of year the barns are filled with livestock; these animals give off large amounts of body heat. When condensation occurs it is a sign that some attention is needed; in most cases it is a problem with ventilation or with insulation.

### To Watch Semen Tanks For Corrosion

Whether your liquid nitrogen refrigerator is stainless steel, aluminum, or other material, be sure to observe it for possible corrosion, according to Chester Hughes, Extension Agent - Livestock. Any metal can corrode under unfavorable conditions. The most likely location for corrosion to start is on the bottom of the refrigerator, especially if it rests on concrete. High moisture areas increase the probability of corrosion.

You can minimize semen losses by routinely observing your refrigerator for nitrogen usage rates, corrosion, or other conditions detrimental to the tank. Liquid nitrogen tanks are simple and dependable, but they do need some observation and management.

Replacing a refrigerator is good risk management and good semen insurance. If your tank is seven years or older, of it is rusted, dented, or corroded, it is a prime candidate for replacement.

### To Sort Tobacco

Tobacco stripping is underway in this part of the state and many hours will be spent removing the leaves from the stalk. The days of special handling and sizing seem to be over; however, it is still very important that growers sort the injured and ground leaves from the good tobacco. This will be required if the crop is being sold on grade. With some "pull off" crops this is less important. On the other hand growers should be fair enough to sort out the undesirable leaves. If this is not done, the buyer will be unhappy and look elsewhere for their tobacco supplies.

Some sorting is necessary with every crop regardless of the method of selling.

### To Use A Real Tree For Christmas

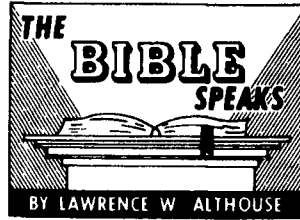
This is the time of year that most people are considering the type of Christmas tree to buy. And, I hear objections to using real trees as being wasteful. So let's take a look at this situation.

Actually, the Christmas tree farmer is raising trees as a crop, and a source of income. This is much the same as the farmer who raises wheat, corn or soybeans to sell or use on his own farm. Christmas trees are raised on land not suited for other crops — not even pasture land. It's mostly roll-

ing land and highly acid.

Also, remember that these Christmas tree farmers are putting this land to good use; by conserving the soil and providing an excellent water shed. Keep in mind that Christmas tree farmers have a very slow turnover in their capital-- from the time they plant the tree till it's ready for your living room can be from 5 to 6 years for small trees and 10 to 15 years on the larger trees. Another fact to consider is there is nothing like the fresh aroma of a real tree in your home during the Christmas season.

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HOW SHALL THIS BE?  
December 11, 1988

Background Scripture: Luke 1:26-56.

Devotional Reading: Genesis 18:9-15; Isaiah 11:1-5.

Several years ago my wife, Valere, and I wrote a book based on our experience with breast cancer, *You Can Save Your Breast* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982). At the time it seemed an almost impossible task. The only reason we persevered against such great odds was that we felt convinced God wanted us to share our experience with others. After we surmounted those obstacles and got the manuscript written, there was a new obstacle: getting a publisher to accept it. I believe we must have submitted it to more than 50 publishers before, with the help of Norman Cousins, we got an acceptance.

Valere and I need to remember that experience from time to time. It seemed impossible to get the book written and then published, but we did not give up and eventually our dream became a reality. I won't bother to recount all the times along the way that we asked ourselves, "How can this be?" but I can assure you it wasn't once or twice.

### THOSE "IMPOSSIBLE" TASKS

Today, when we recall the hundreds of people who have written and called us to thank us for writing that book, I realize that we must have been correct in our original assumption that God wanted us to do it. It had seemed impossible, but it appears to us that God helped us to do what had seemed "impossible." That is neither the first nor the only time we have experienced something like that in our lives. God, it seems upon reflection, is constantly calling us -- and you -- to do this or

that. It may mean helping someone in the public eye (writing a book) or in relative obscurity (helping a neighbor), but often our response is the same: "How can this be?" We are quite certain this challenge is too big for us, requires skill and knowledge we don't have, or is "out of our league." Sometimes we are right in making these assessments and sometime we are wrong. But it doesn't matter if God is challenging us.

That was Mary's experience. The angel Gabriel came to her with what must have seemed the most frightening of all messages; "And behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus" (1:31). Of course, Gabriel had said more than that, but I'm sure those are the words she remembered best because they were the most disturbing. And she responded just as most of us would have: "How can this be, since I have no husband?"

All of us have said something similar at one time or another: How can this be? -- I have no training as a teacher; I don't know how to pray in public; I have so little time as it is; I've never been a leader; I've been sick for so long; I have no talents or special skills; I don't have enough for myself; who would listen to me -- and the list goes on and on.

There's nothing wrong with this response, so far as it goes. Mary did have a point: she had no husband and it was unthinkable to her that she could become pregnant without one. humanly speaking, there was no way out of this dilemma. But Gabriel was speaking from beyond the human perspective: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (1:35).

Assured God's promise, Mary stopped worrying about the possibility of this challenge, for she knew that with God nothing is impossible: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (1:38).

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## Farm Calendar

**Saturday, December 10**  
Dauphin Co. Ag and Natural Resources Center, Open House, Dauphin, through Dec. 11.

**Monday, December 12**  
Mid-Atlantic Extension Poultry Health Conference, Clayton Hall, Univ. of Delaware, Newark.

Lehigh County Annual Meeting, Bake Oven Inn, Kempton, 7:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, December 14**  
Mid-Atlantic Conservation Tillage Conference, 8 a.m. York Fairgrounds.

**Friday, December 16**  
Univ. of Delaware Extension Grain Meeting, Sheraton, Dover, 9 a.m.

**Tuesday, December 20**  
Monroe Co. Ag Security Meeting, Polk Township Fire Hall, 7 p.m.

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