



OPINION

Food Safety On The Evening News

To properly assess the food safety issue, you need to define such words as "safe," "risk" and "hazard." Many hazards arise in life, but we often need to move into action based on the assessment of risk. Nothing is completely safe.

Dr. Joseph Hotchkiss, associate professor, department of food science, Cornell University, illustrated the concept at the 1990 Food Safety Conference in Ithaca last week. With a step ladder on stage, he said the ladder represented a hazard. In fact, manufacturers now attach a warning label on these instruments of elevation. You could fall off the ladder and break your leg.

But when Hotchkiss jumped down from the first step, the risk was obviously very small. A jump from three steps down was more risky, but accomplished without incident. But a jump from the top step was more risk than the professor wanted to attempt in front of all the media people assembled for the conference.

The same analogy applies to chemicals and food safety. If we want to make good judgments on food safety, we want to know the hazard, but more importantly we want to know the risk. And this risk depends on the exposure or dose involved and the potency of the chemical. Some food chemical carcinogens are so low, for example saccharin, that by public demand, millions of pounds were produced and consumed as artificial sweeteners. In other cases, the carcinogens may be greater in the product, but the chance of a person getting a harmful amount of the chemical is infinitesimally small.

In the United States, we consume an average of 1420 pounds of food per person per year. That's nearly three tons of food for each family with four members. These consumers want a safe food supply. But because natural chemical carcinogens occur in foods, it's impossible to have what the consumer would call completely safe food. Certainly it's not fair to blame man-made chemicals for all the hazards we face.

But we can make the risk factor small. And published reports in the media can help consumers assess these risk factors if the writer or broadcaster is willing to do so.

To this end, the Food Safety Conference was held at Cornell. Sponsors included professional farm writers and broadcasters, extension personnel and departments from both New York State College and Cornell University. The goal of these farm communicators and educators was to provide an educational forum for opinion leaders in the general print and broadcast media who may be several generations removed from the farm. Often these journalists who are highly respected by their readers, viewers and listeners are not aware of the complexities that go into farm production and modern food processing.

Certainly those organizations and persons responsible for planning and presenting the program are to be commended. Matthew Shulman, senior communications associate, Cornell Cooperative Extension would head the list to receive plaudits. Hopefully this conference, attended by about 100 news people, will produce a more sympathetic agricultural viewpoint when the next food safety scare report hits the evening news.



NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin
Lancaster County
Agricultural Agent

To Prepare For Corn Planting

We are fast approaching corn planting time and if your planter is not "ready to go" then put this high on your list for jobs that must be done. If you plan to change the row width, be sure to calibrate your planter to the plant population you desire. This should be done well ahead of time, so if you need new plates, they can be picked up and installed. Also your pest control programs should be worked out.

If you are on a no-till program and have a cover crop of rye, wheat or barley, then it should be sprayed when the vegetation is 18-24 inches tall. Paraquat plus a surfactant does an excellent job.

As far as insect control goes, research data collected from numerous sites over the past several years indicates that soil insecticide treatments for corn rootworm control have not significantly increased yields except in a small percentage of the fields. If rootworm was not a problem in the past, treatment will not be necessary. If the field was in anything but corn last year, there would not be a rootworm problem because they only survive on corn roots.

To Give Old Pastures A Boost
Are your pastures worn-out and

weedy? Are you thinking about reseeding them? This could be costly and time consuming. Plus, if done at this time of the year, there is a greater risk of soil erosion and seeding failure. The best time to seed grasses is in early September.

A cheaper and better alternative might be to lime, fertilize and clip your pastures this spring to build up soil fertility, to reduce weed competition and to encourage the grasses that are already present. The use of some herbicides you may discover that your pasture is better than you thought, and reseeding may not be necessary. Remember, you can always no-till additional grasses and legumes into the pasture if desired.

To Consider Footbaths

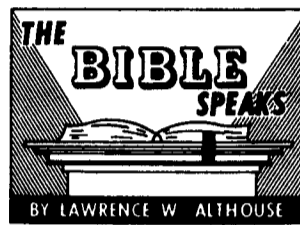
The use of footbaths can help prevent the spread of foot rot organisms, but it may not help cows that are already infected. Footbaths can also help toughen up soft hooves. Hooves can become soft when cows are housed in wet-floored, free stall barns or on bedded packs, or when they have been exposed to muddy

lots and wet pastures.

Footbaths can be located in exits from cow stables or milking parlors. A footbath solution can be made by mixing 1 pound of copper sulfate in 5 gallons of water. Another alternative is to mix 4-6 ounces of Formalin in 1 gallon of water. A dry footbath preparation can also be made by mixing 5 pounds of copper sulfate powder -- not crystals -- with 100 pounds of hydrated lime.

To Develop Safe Habits

Farming is the most hazardous occupation in the U.S. Yes, farming passed mining which held that position for many years. In fact the average farm worker can expect that once every four years he'll be injured so severely that medical attention is needed. Farmers have a work accident rate that's two and a half times greater than the average for all industries. The problem is, that unlike industry, farmers work with a minimal amount of supervision and they may not be properly trained for the job. We urge farmers, during this busy season, to take time to be safe.



DO YOU KNOW JESUS?
April 22, 1990

Background Scripture:

John 18:28 through 19:16.

Devotional Reading:

Hebrews 12:3-11.

Three weeks ago I said that sometimes the Christian has to play by different rules than those popularly established in the world. I could have just as easily said that we sometimes have to "march to a different drummer," but that quotation from Thoreau has been overquoted, it seems.

Our model for this kind of "difference," of course, is Jesus himself. Have you ever noticed how often Jesus seems to be playing by different rules than the rest of society? No matter what his contemporaries did or said, he refused to be compelled to play the game their way. We've already noted his different way of handling the arrest party in the Garden of Gethsemane. These people had the power of the sword to enforce their authority, but, despite his physical defenselessness, it is Jesus who seems strangely in charge of the situation.

WHO'S IN CHARGE?

This is also apparent in Jesus' appearances before Pontius Pilate, the supreme secular authority in the land. At one point, Pilate says to Jesus: "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you and power to crucify you?" (19:10). The very fact that Pilate felt it necessary to say this indicates that he did not feel in control of the situation. Somehow that he could not

fathom it was apparent that this defenseless man from Nazareth was in charge, not he.

Replying to Pilate's question, Jesus said: "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above" (19:11). He is saying that while Pilate has jurisdiction over the physical body of Jesus, he has no authority over his spirit. That which is really important in Jesus lies quite beyond the authority of Pilate.

A DIFFERENT KINGSHIP

Jesus continues in this vein when he tells Pilate, "My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews" (18:36). Once again, Jesus indicates that he is not playing by the same rules as Pilate and the world. His is a kingship of people's hearts and minds, a kingdom not of physical power, but spiritual power. This is something that Christians and churches sometimes forget.

Apparently, however, Pilate doesn't really understand this concept and he asks, "So you are a king?" And Jesus answers, "You say that I am a king." This is your term, not mine. Then Jesus uses terminology that is more suited to his own self-understanding: "For this I was born, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth, hears my voice" (18:37). If Pilate is "of the truth," he will understand what Jesus is saying. But instead, Pilate asks that perennial question: "What is truth?"

Actually, Jesus had already indicated the answer to the question, indicating that he was dealing with ultimate issues, not temporal. So the truth to which he was sent to bear witness is nothing less than the truth about ultimate reality: God. Thus, Jesus was able to say, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

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Farm Forum

Editor:

I am writing concerning Governor Casey's proposed \$33,000 budget cut for the FFA Foundation. It amazes me that the governor proposes to cut \$33,000 from a fund that actively supports youth, and at the same time proposes spending hundreds of thousands on youth rehabilitation programs.

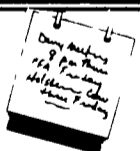
The adage, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" I feel, can certainly apply in this situation. I am not questioning the value of the rehabilitative programs, but my question is why cut a program that is already supporting youth?

In thirty years of teaching Agriculture Education I have had several students have their interest

(Turn to Page A39)

(Turn to Page A40)

Farm Calendar



Saturday, April 21

Arabian Gelding Auction, Quentin Riding Club, Quentin, 9:00 a.m.

Penn State Dairy Science Club's annual Dairy Exposition, Ag Arena, University Park, 8:00 a.m.

4-H and FFA Dairy Judging Con-

test, Delaware Valley College Dairy Society, Feldman Ag Building, 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
Elk Co. Farmers Association spring meeting, Summit Grange, St. Marys, 7:30 p.m.
Pa. Plantation Walking Horse Assoc. Spring Clinic, Friendly

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