



OPINION

Approach Manure Pits With Caution

Underground storage pits are convenient, efficient and an increasingly popular way to store large amounts of manure, but they must be handled with care, according to a Penn State College of Agriculture farm safety expert. The danger peaks when stored manure is being agitated or emptied. Dr. Dennis Murphy, professor of agricultural engineering at Penn State says the fermentation process inside a manure storage pit also produces methane, hydrogen sulfide, carbon dioxide and ammonia. When these hazardous gases build up, the atmosphere inside the pit can become toxic, low in oxygen and even explosive.

If someone collapses in a pit, amateur rescue efforts often result in more fatalities. Several tragedies involving multiple deaths in a manure pit have occurred nationwide. In one incident, five family members died.

Gas concentrations are so high that it's literally suicide for anyone else to enter without protection. The only safe way to rescue someone who has collapsed in a pit is to ventilate the pit and wait for rescue personnel with the proper equipment.

Taking precautions can help to minimize manure storage hazards. Don't fill the pit to full capacity. Allow a foot or two of air space to accommodate concentrations of these gases. When agitating stored manure or emptying the pit, keep out of storage buildings and provide strong, constant ventilation.

Don't go into the pit unless you absolutely have to, Murphy advises. The only safe way to enter is to wear a self-contained breathing apparatus, along with a safety liner attached to a hoist with a person standing by to assist you in an emergency. Provide ventilation and keep in constant visual contact with someone who can pull you to safety using the hoist.

Summer's hot temperatures can increase gas buildup, but a manure pit is always potentially dangerous. Toxic gas concentrations can occur at any time of the year.

Hydrogen sulfide, the most hazardous manure pit gas, is colorless, heavier than air and smells like rotten eggs. At low concentrations, it paralyzes the sense of smell and causes dizziness, headaches, nausea and irritation of the respiratory tract. At high concentrations it can cause unconsciousness and respiratory failure within seconds and death within minutes.

Low concentrations of carbon dioxide can cause labored breathing and headaches. High concentrations can asphyxiate people and animals by displacing oxygen in the air. But unless all ventilation into and around the pit stops for a few hours, carbon dioxide usually does not build up to a lethal level, according to Murphy.

Ammonia can severely damage the eyes, nose, throat and lungs when it combines with moisture in those tissues to form a caustic alkaline substance. High concentrations can be fatal, but ammonia's irritating nature usually prompts people to leave the area quickly.

Methane is highly flammable and explosive, but it is impossible to detect without special equipment. Because it is lighter than air, methane rises out of manure pits, but it can collect under hoods, roof ridges and corners, where torches, cigarettes or sparks from electrical shorts can ignite explosions. Approach manure pits with caution

NOW IS THE TIME
By John Schwartz
Lancaster County Agricultural Agent

To Practice Preventative Maintenance
Preventative maintenance is a very important part of any business, including farming. Every piece of equipment, machinery and vehicle should have a preventative maintenance program.

Preventative maintenance is seeing routine maintenance is formed to prevent unnecessary breakdowns and extensive repairs. Someone should have the responsibility of seeing the preventative maintenance program is being followed.

Such simple items such as changing filters, greasing equipment, sharpening knives, changing oil, and tightening belts and chains will lengthen the life of equipment. At today's cost of equipment,

Farm Forum

Editor,

A very important bill in our Pennsylvania legislature, House Bill Number 1344, needs the support of all FFA and 4-H supporters across the state.

The Cole-Hayes bill creates a grant program for qualifying agricultural and rural youth organizations, with absolutely no taxpayer dollars being used. The monies were transferred from the Farmers Home Administration in 1982. They were used by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture for two programs, the farmers market loan program and a new technology loan program, both of which experienced limited success.

The PDA has the choice of using the money for a number of purposes, including agricultural youth programs, but to date have not done so. Legislation is necessary because:

1. Both the previous and present Administrations have chosen not to direct support for agricultural rural youth.

Examples:

Agriculture Fair Appropriation was vetoed from the budget in 1988.

Funding for the FFA was eliminated in the last two proposed budgets.

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every farmer needs to extend the life of all equipment. The new status symbol in agriculture should be who has obtained the longest use of equipment, not who replaces equipment first.

To Make Your Dollars Work

The current "economic slow-down" is causing financial stress for many businesses. Smart business managers anticipate hard times and position their companies so they will survive.

This means making hard decisions. Analyzing all costs, eliminating unprofitable units, and delaying purchase of new equipment are a few techniques used. Farmers need to practice these same business techniques.

Before spending a dollar, the farmer should ask how much money will it generate. If it will not generate more than a \$1.10, then the expenditure should be seriously question. Many extra features offered on equipment maybe

pretty and expensive but do not generate any additional income.

So, with reduced income from lower prices and dry weather, now is the time to control costs and make sure every dollar spent brings in additional income.

To Have Family Picnics

When was the last time your family had a picnic together?

Picnics are a fun activity for the whole family. We are fortunate to have many county and state parks nearby that offer excellent picnic facilities.

If you cannot get away from home, your own backyard or "the back 40 acres" also offer excellent picnic sites. Build a charcoal fire, grill your favorite meat and vegetables, and roast a few marshmallows.

Take a few minutes to reflect on life, enjoy the view and have fun with your family. Picnics are simple to plan and add a new twist to summer activities.

ON HEARING THE TRUMPETS
June 9, 1991

Background Scripture: Ezra 3; Hagai 1:1-2:8.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 57:14-21.

My first full-time church after graduating from seminary was very nearly my last church. I was sent to what my District Superintendent would later term "a problem church." The problem was that an old country church near Harrisburg, PA, found itself in the midst of an area that was rapidly becoming suburban. As the lay leader of the church stated it shortly after I arrived, "This was a nice family church and that's the way we want to keep it."

Of course, "family" to her meant essentially her family and she and others fairly bristled when newcomers tried to become part of our church family. The tension became even worse as we neared the completion of a bright, new church edifice. For many years, the people of this rural community had worshipped in "the little white church on the corner." It was obvious that eventually "the little white church" would have to come down. It had served well for many years, but there was no place for it in the church's future.

RESISTING CHANGE

If I had been older and wiser — as I surely am now! — and not so young and idealistic, I could probably have brought all that off without nearly so much pain and hostility. Perhaps I could have made the transition less difficult for them — and myself. But, as we Pennsylvania Dutch say, "Ve get

too soon oldt, und too late schmart!" (It loses something in translation, I'll admit.)

I am probably now the same age that my lay leader was back in that first pastorate. (Actually, she was probably a bit younger than I am now.) I can better appreciate how she and her family felt. It is human nature to resist change and the older we get the more painful change seems to be. So, too many of us spend too much time lamenting what is no more or what is passing all too swiftly.

Actually, both of us were "right," to use a term that is clearly inadequate. In any given situation we must value both the past and the future and govern our present accordingly. It is typical of youth to want to forge ahead to the new, just as it is understandable for aged to lament the passing of the old. It is alright for us to shed some tears over the past that we are losing, but we must never let our tears drown out the trumpets! **TEARS AND TRUMPETS**

That's what happened in Ezra 3 when the returned exiles laid the foundation for the rebuilding of the temple: "And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the priests and Levites... old men who had seen the first house (the temple of Solomon), wept with a loud voice... though many shouted for joy; so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping..." (3:11b,12).

I like the way it is put in I Esdras 5:65 (don't bother looking for it — it's in the Apocrypha): "...the people could not hear the trumpets because of the weeping of the people." Change may cause us tears, but we ought never to allow our tears to drown out God's trumpets.

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Farm Calendar

Saturday, June 8

- Lebanon Co. Dairy Princess Pageant, Lebanon Co. Vo-Tech School.
- Adams Co. Dairy Princess Pageant, Biglerville High School, Biglerville, 8 p.m.
- Somerset Co. Dairy Princess Pageant, Somerset Area High School, 7:30 p.m.
- Bradford Co. Dairy Princess Pageant, Troy Senior High Auditorium, 8:15 p.m.

Pa. Young Dairymen's Association, southcentral district, meeting, Logan Bower Farm, Blain, 11:30 a.m.

Dairy Goat Showcase, Allentown Fairgrounds, 8:30 a.m.
PCC Young Cooperative Leaders Conference, Days Inn, State College, thru June 10.

Sunday, June 9

Southcentral Young Holstein Breeders picnic, Logan Bower

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CAN YOU FIND THESE TEN DAIRY PRODUCTS IN THE WORD MAZE?

- BUTTER
- MILK
- SKIM MILK
- BUTTER MILK
- CHEESE
- COTTAGE CHEESE
- YOGURT
- CREAM
- WHIPPED CREAM
- CREAM CHEESE

U Q H G R L C E S E E H C M A E R C
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ANSWERS
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