



OPINION

Hey, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

Dear Dudes,

Can we talk?

We've been friends for a long time, right? Back in '88, before you Green Teens made it into Saturday prime time, I was there for you. I tuned you in at 6 a.m. while my younger son drank his second bottle of the day. For a long time, you were my only original contribution to adult conversation: "You wouldn't believe this cartoon show that's on before dawn."

I know all your names, your colors, your weapons. I know which one of you is the oldest, tallest, heaviest. I know your friends and your enemies. I know about Dimension X. I know what makes you say "Cowabunga." My sons own turtle toys and turtle towels, turtle sheets and turtle sleep sacks. I've bought your cookies, your cereal and your Crunchabunga pizza snacks.

I even bought your pudding-filled turtle pies — once. I couldn't get enthusiastic about something with green frosting marketed as "fresh from the sewer to you."

It's your latest commercial venture that I want to talk to you about. It's your new children's book, "ABC's for a Better Planet." I ordered it when the Scholastic Book order form came home in my older son's weekly school folder. I have to ask: Did you guys even read this stuff before you put your name on it?

I know you're environmentally conscious. I've seen you on TV, Michaelangelo, recycling aluminum cans to get money for chocolate artichoke anchovy pizza. And you, Leonardo, you put on a sweater rather than turn up the heat. But I have to take exception to this book.

Donatello, you're the scientist of the group. You've got a college degree, earned by correspondence from Sopho U. I. expect some objectivity, at least, from you. But take a look at your book, at "M is for Meat." It's your picture on that page. It says some growth hormones injected in meat animals cause cancer. But it doesn't say how infinitesimal the risk is. It says a lot of the world's cereal crop is fed to cattle, when it could be used to feed starving people instead. But there's no mention about how grazing animals turn forages people can't eat into meat that they can.

Or how about "P is for pesticides?" The book says some pesticides are still in food when it gets to the supermarket. Again, no mention of how infinitesimal that risk is. The book says, eat less meat and get your folks to buy organically raised beef cattle and organically grown produce.

There's some good stuff in your book — "Ask lots of Questions," "Volunteer to help clean up" the environment (Could you add, "and also your room?"), don't eat fast food too often (Sad news, Raphael, dude) — but mostly it's over-simplified and because of this, alarmist. Most respected scientists would say, for example, that the jury's still out on the greenhouse effect. But not your book.

I'm not convinced this book is really for children. Kids who are learning their ABCs are not ready to read or comprehend words you use, like chlorofluorocarbons or polychlorinated biphenyls. I think the audience is us — adults who read to children who are just figuring out the alphabet.

I like what I read to be objective — or at least factual. And I expect the same in children's books. But I'm going to take some advice from this book — I'm going to recycle it - now.

Next time, do what Master Splinter's always telling you: think first, then act.

End of lecture. See you Saturday morning.

(By Cheryl Stubbendieck, vice president for information, Nebraska Farm Bureau in American Farm Bureau News.)



NOW IS THE TIME

By John Schwartz
Lancaster County
Agricultural Agent

To Test Feed

Every farmer mixing or making his own feed should have a regular feed testing program.

The recent dry weather makes it more important to be testing feed ingredients. Weight per bushel, nitrate levels, energy, protein content, and mineral levels are a few of the feed quality factors affected by weather.

In addition, crops grown under stress could have higher mycotoxin levels. Because of the dry weather, many farmers will be purchasing feed. Make sure you have quality specifications defined and you spot check to make sure the feed meets your quality standards.

Some items to consider are minimum protein, foreign matter, mycotoxins, TDN, and moisture. There is a great deal of variability within every type of feed. To obtain the best performance, test your feed ingredients. Then formulate your rations from actual values instead of book values.

To Have Your Water Tested

Farms have their own private water supply that is not subject to routine water testing. Thus, it is very important that private water supplies be tested at least once a year.

To protect your family and livestock, your water should be tested for bacteria, nitrates, sulfates, dissolved solids, and pH. These tests address the most common and serious health concerns, and indicate contamination from sewage or manure.

Farm Calendar

Saturday, July 20

Pa. Cattlemen's Association Field Day, Lee and Linda Snyder's Harvest Plantation, Franklin, Pa.

Lancaster 4-H Horse Show. Berks Co. Wool Pool, Reading Fairgrounds, 7:30 a.m.

Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Fair, Pocono Downs Race Track, thru July 21.

Lycoming Co. Fair, Hughesville. Susquehanna Co. Dairy Tour. Jefferson County Fair, Brookville.

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There are many private labs that test water. Contact the lab nearest you to obtain test kits and instructions for collecting the sample.

Knowing the status of your water quality and taking corrective measures when necessary will help you prevent serious health problems for your family and livestock.

If you have any questions on water testing, interpreting water test results, and treating water quality problems, Penn State has developed several agricultural engineering fact sheets on these subjects. These fact sheets are available at your local Penn State Cooperative Extension office.

To Learn About Pesticides

I am amazed at how many people, including farmers, do not understand what is a pesticide.

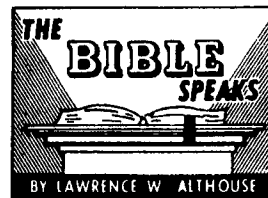
Many times I see the phrase herbicides and pesticides being used together. When I question people about this, they say herbicides or weed killers are not pesticides.

The truth is that any chemical or other agent used to kill or control pests is a pesticide. "Pesticide" is the general term that includes all classes of chemicals designed to kill or control pests. Herbicides, insecticides, rodenticides, and nematocides are examples of pesticides designed to kill or control specific pests.

Herbicides control weeds, insecticides kill insects, rodenticides kill rodents, and nematocides eliminate nematodes.

We all need and use pesticides to control pests. These pesticides protect public health, increase crop and livestock production, and improve our quality of life. A lot of research and testing goes into a pesticide before it is released for use to the general public.

It is very important to read and follow the label directions before using any pesticide. By reading and following label directions, we are making sure the pest is controlled while not causing harm to beneficial plants and animals, the environment, and humans.



Background Scripture:

Nehemiah 5.

Devotional Reading:

Deuteronomy 15:1-11.

No doubt about it: it is far better for us to love God than to fear him. As a parent I learned a long time ago that when my children obeyed me out of love, it was more satisfying than when they obeyed out of fear.

At the same time, I realize that fearing God is better than neither fearing nor loving him. In my own life I recall there were times when I refrained from certain behaviors because I feared my parents' reaction. I wish I had behaved that way out of mature love instead of immature fear, but I'm glad that there was something to keep me from making harmful mistakes. I confess that even today there are times when my fear motivates me instead of love — like on the highway when I want to exceed the speed limit.

My point in all this is that old argument that "you can't legislate morality." Actually, that's not true: we can and we need to. It would be wonderful if we could all be motivated by our sense of righteousness — and it is certainly much better when we are — but until the human race has reached perfection or at least its God-given human potential; that is not likely.

LEGISLATING MORALITY

I will also agree that legislation alone is not the answer. It may persuade people to be just or honest in their actions, even though they don't want to be. Eventually, we need to try to change their attitudes as well as their actions. In other words, legislation is the beginning of morality, and the end. It attempts to force compliance with moral standards, but

we also need to work to inspire a desire to do what the law requires.

If I go out this afternoon and buy a used car, I would hope that the dealer would want to be honest and not deceive me about the condition of the car. I would much prefer to deal with someone who would not want to cheat me. At the same time I am glad that there are laws in this state that compel him to be reasonably honest.

STRANGERS AND BRETHREN

I find it interesting that, having met the fearful threat of danger from outside the Jerusalem community, Nehemiah next turns to an equally threatening situation within the community. It is even more significant because, while we might suspect that outsiders might not always treat us honestly, we like to think that those within our own group will. That is why the people were so vigorous in their complaints to Nehemiah. Their families were starving, their creditors were foreclosing on their mortgages, and they were losing what little they had, not to the hostile Samaritans, but to their own Jewish brethren.

Nehemiah was shocked and spoke bluntly about this evil situation. But, more important and quite contrary to our inclinations, he didn't just talk about it, he did something!

Nehemiah didn't wait for either love or maturity to prod the consciences of the exploiters. He didn't mind appealing to fear: "Ought you not to walk in the fear of our God...?" Even after they agreed to cease their exploitation and make restitution, he threatens: "So may God shake out every man from his house and from his labor who does not perform this promise" (5:13).

I personally prefer love and maturity, but there are times when fear is where we have to begin before we can work up to love.

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