



# OPINION

## Positions Eliminated

In recent years, the long list of markets we cover has provided a special service to our readers as well as a service to the marketing organizations.

We mention it here because recently we have been notified that the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture has or will soon cease to report a number of these auctions. While some of these markets provide their own information, the PDA reports have been the source of many of them. But because several people have retired and will not be replaced, the personnel is no longer available at PDA to cover these auctions. Especially hard hit are the western Pennsylvania livestock and hay and grain markets.

While we know government is slashing these services to farmers because of budgetary restraints, we think cutting budget in this area is not good. But once a position has been eliminated, we doubt it will ever be restored.

To help everyone involved, we have opened contact with all the markets that will no longer be covered by PDA. Whenever possible, by fax or by phone, we will obtain reports from these markets so that the coverage can continue as it has in the past.

We plan to bridge the gap so that you can continue to be informed of auction results and their trends. In more and more cases, we will need to depend on the market's own reports for inclusion in our market pages.



**NOW IS THE TIME**  
By John Schwartz  
Lancaster County Agricultural Agent

### To Prevent Hearing Loss

Farm noise levels are extremely high and may cause permanent hearing loss.

Research has shown that noise levels above 85 decibels may result in hearing loss when someone is exposed to that level for at least eight hours. Duration and intensity of noise exposure is important to degree of hearing loss.

A chain saw at 110 decibels may result in damage after only one half hour. Tractors produce noise levels at 100 decibels or more — well above the OSHA standard of 85 decibels for an 8-hour duration.

In order to control these exposures, the EPA has developed ratings for hearing protection using items such as foam earplugs and ear muffs. These standards are referred to as "noise reduction ratings," or NRRs, and range from 0-30 decibels. This rating is the number of decibels being reduced to the operator when wearing the hearing protection device.

It is important for all persons who are exposed to potentially damaging noise levels to wear hearing protection. Remember, hearing damage may occur in both young and old.

Hearing aids do not restore hearing loss, they only amplify sounds. Protect your hearing with the new generation of hearing protection before hearing damage is done.

### To Consider Hillside Farrowing Pens

Woody Ornamental Plant Identification Course, Neshaminy Manor Center, Doylestown, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Bradford/Tioga Dairy Repro Workshop, Sylvania Community Hall, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

**Thursday, January 23**  
Pa. State Association of County Fairs, Hershey Lodge, thru Jan. 25.

Dairy quality assurance meeting, Lancaster Farm and Home Center, 7 p.m.

Tax meeting, Ramada Inn, DuBois, 9 a.m.-3:45 p.m.

(Turn to Page A31)

Dan McFarland, capitol region agricultural engineer, reports that many producers are finding "hillside" farrowing pens a good way to allow sow freedom of movement and reduce crushing of little pigs.

The overall dimensions of the pen range from 6 feet by 6 feet to 6 feet by 8 feet. The pen slopes, along the width, from 8 to 12 inches.

An 18-inch creep area is placed along the lower side of the pen. As the theory goes, newborn pigs will slide into the creep area, dry off, and return to the sow to nurse when they have a little more vigor and are in less danger of crushing.

Sows lie with their heads up or down, but most always with their udders facing the creep area. When building new farrowing pens, consider the hillside design.

### To Purchase Cattle Wisely

Good herd health is vital to herd profits.

So are good cows. When you purchase cattle, you could be buying more than good genetics and good production. You could also be purchasing some unwanted health problems.

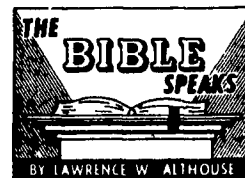
A good rule of thumb is to consider all purchased cows guilty until proven innocent and infected until proven healthy. Check on the vaccination and health status of the cattle you are buying.

Consider having some tests done yourself before making the purchase. Purchase from a single source if possible. Transport them in clean trucks.

Discuss with your veterinarian the vaccines that might be needed to protect your herd.

By taking some precautions, you could eliminate a very serious and expensive situation.

*Feather Prof's Footnote: "Take time to pray — it is the greatest power on earth."*



**Background Scripture:** Song of Solomon 2:8-17.

**Devotional Reading:** I Corinthians 13.

Christians and Jews alike have often not known what to do with The Song of Solomon (or The Song of Songs). In this ancient book there is no overt religious content, no mention whatsoever of God. There is no literary or dramatic structure to the book and it uses many Hebrew terms that are rare in the Bible.

Just what is this book supposed to be? Is it an allegory? A drama? A Syrian wedding ritual? A Hebrew poem that reflects the influence of Canaanite fertility religion? Or is it a series of secular love songs that got into the Old Testament canon because it was erroneously assumed that they were written by King Solomon? These are some of the answers provided by various scholars.

Even if one treats it as an allegory of the relationship of Christ and his Church — one which is frequently used by Christians — there are passages of the book which most of us would be hesitant to read in a worship service. There is hardly anything in the book that could be called "devotional" in nature.

Let's assume for a moment that these are secular love songs, that their original intention was to celebrate romantic and carnal love. Is there anything that God can say to us through these songs? Can we learn anything about love from them?

The very fact that this book is in the Bible should dispel once and for all the latterday Christian notion that sexual union is inherently either evil — necessary or otherwise — or, at best, an experience that is essentially secular. The Song of Solomon's presence in the

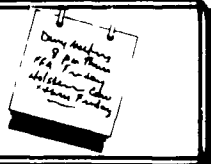
Old Testament assures us that sex is a gift of God. Like any of God's gifts, sex can be misused, exploited, prostituted, or serve as a substitute for God. But our problem is not in what sex is, but what we make it.

The writer of this book says "for I am sick with love" (2:5). That's right, in its romantic and erotic forms, love is a kind of sickness, sometimes even with aberrant physical and emotional symptoms. In the throes of this love, some people can't think straight, lose their appetites, run a slight fever, act obsessively and irrationally, and behave in a manner contrary to their normal state of intelligence. It is one of the few sicknesses of humanity that can be either pleasant or painful, or both. During the most chronic phases of this being "sick with love," we are governed more by our hormones than by our intellect.

Would anyone want to say that, in ordaining this state of affairs, God had done something less than divinely good or wise? We may not understand these overwhelming attractions, and some of us may not handle them very well, but that doesn't say that they are not without their appointed place in his plan of creation. If, then, we are squeamish about reading this book in public worship, if some of its passages make us uncomfortable, the problem is with us, not with those who wrote the book, nor our God who created us this way.

If we have experienced love in its deeper dimensions, we know that although love may begin with the hormones of attraction, that is just the beginning of the process. From attraction, we must move to genuine mutual regard — and we see some of that in the Song of Solomon — to commitment, and, most of all, friendship, the deepest form of friendship in which love has grown from wanting to giving, from possessing to sharing, and, as Jesus Christ demonstrated for all of us to see, being willing to lay down one's own life for the sake of the other.

## Farm Calendar



### Saturday, January 18

Franklin Co. Holstein Club meeting, Lemasters Community Center, 7 p.m.

Franklin Co. annual meeting, Lemasters Community Center, Lemasters, 7 p.m.

Beaver/Lawrence annual meeting, New York Beef Cattlemen's Association annual meeting, Corning Hilton Inn, Corning, N.Y., thru Jan. 18.

### Sunday, January 19

### Monday, January 20

Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc. bus trip to Poultry Expo in Atlanta, thru Jan. 24.

Susquehanna Valley Dairy Day, Paxtonville United Methodist Church, 9 a.m.-3:15 p.m.

Satellite Crop Production Program, Penn State Worthington Campus.

Satellite Forage Crops Seminar, Lincoln Intermediate Unit, New Oxford, 9:30 a.m.

Ag Education Day, Port Allegany Vo-Tech, 9:30 a.m.-3:15 p.m.

Adams Co. forage crops meeting, Lincoln Intermediate Unit, New Oxford, 9:30 a.m.

### Tuesday, January 21

Dairy reproduction workshop, Mt. View Restaurant, Clifford, repeats Jan. 28.

Dairy/Crops Day, Ramada Inn, DuBois, 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Lancaster Extension 28th annual banquet, Farm and Home Center, 6:30 p.m.

Beef producers meeting, Shipensburg H.S., 7:30 p.m.

Pa. Lime, Fertilizer, and Pesticide Conference, Days Inn Penn State, thru Jan. 23.

Winter Grounds Maintenance Seminar, Ramada Inn, Allentown, 9 a.m.-3:45 p.m.

York Co. Dairy Day, Winterstown Fire Hall, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Dairy quality assurance meeting, Embers Restaurant, Carlisle, 7 p.m.

Area tax meeting, Holiday Inn, Edinboro, 9 a.m.-3:45 p.m.

Beef Evaluation Program, live evaluation, Leesport Farmer's Market, Leesport, 7 p.m.

"Improving Swine Production Efficiency," television short course, downlinked to Berks Campus, Reading.

Ag bankers meeting, Lancaster Farm and Home Center, 9:15 a.m.

Woody Ornamental Plant Identification Course, Neshaminy Manor Center, Doylestown, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., thru Jan. 22.

Warren Co. annual meeting, Sugar Grove Fire Hall, 7:30 p.m.

Perry Co. Extension annual meeting, Perry Valley Grange Hall, 7 p.m.

**Wednesday, January 22**  
Area tax meeting, Days Inn, Butler, 9 a.m.-3:45 p.m.

Coping With Labor Problems In the '90s, Penn State Great Valley, repeats Jan. 29, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

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