



OPINION

Now Is The Time To Test Your Well

To protect both human and farm animal consumers, drinking water from privately-owned wells and springs should be tested once a year for bacteria and nitrates, and at least every three years for sulfates and pH level. These tests will monitor water quality and help to detect possible contamination from sewage, manure and some drilling/mining activities.

According to Robert Leiby and David Dunbar, Lehigh County Extension, coliform bacteria indicate sewage or manure contamination, while high total bacteria counts may include organisms not related to sewage or manure. Many human and animal diseases are caused by bacteria which thrive in sewage and manure.

High nitrate levels can cause methemoglobinemia (blue baby syndrome) in infants up to four months old. Nitrate converts to nitrite in the baby's stomach. Nitrite combines with oxygen in red blood cells, potentially suffocating the child. A symptom of nitrate poisoning is bluish skin, especially around the eyes and mouth. While nitrate poisoning does not seriously affect adult humans and adult monogastric animals such as pigs, it does adversely affect both infant and adult ruminants (cattle, goats, sheep and horses). The presence of nitrates suggests the possibility that other soluble compounds are also leaching into groundwater.

Excessive concentrations of sulfates and other dissolved salts can cause gastrointestinal problems in people and animals.

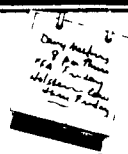
The pH of water indicates its acidity or alkalinity. On the pH scale, 0 is very acid, 14.0 is very alkaline and 7.0 is neutral (neither acid nor alkaline). Acid water with a pH less than 4.5 probably contains mineral acids derived from mine drainage, and it will be very expensive to neutralize. Water with a pH between 5.0 and 6.0 should be neutralized to prevent corrosion of pipes and faucets. When water has a pH above 8.5, it will taste bitter and will require more chlorine for destruction of bacteria. Ruminant animals can be adversely affected by water with either high or low pH.

The following are situations which make it advisable to do extra and immediate water testing:

- when new mining or drilling operations occur near your well or spring.
- when you drill a new well and install a new plumbing system.
- when you change any components of your present water system.
- when your water changes appearance, taste or odor.
- (on a dairy farm) when you experience a noticeable and unexplained drop in milk production.

Now is the time to test your well.

Farm Calendar



Saturday, December 12
National Young Farmers Institute, Des Moines, Iowa.

Sunday, December 13

Monday, December 14
Northwestern Pa. Fruit Growers dinner meeting, New Wilmington Grange Hall, 5:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m.
York County land preservation education meeting, East Manchester Township Building, 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 15
Capitol Region Ag Chemical Safety Compliance School, Farm Show Complex, Harrisburg, 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m.
York County land preservation education meeting, Southeastern Middle School, 7:30 p.m.
Western Pa. Commercial Tree Fruit Seminar, Airport Holiday Inn, Pitsburgh, 8 a.m.-3:15 p.m.

Maryland Dairy Task Force Listening Session, Frederick County 4-H Center, Mountville, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Delmarva Agriculture and the Chesapeake Bay, Wicomico Youth and Civic Center, Salisbury, Md.

Understanding DHIA Records, Solanco Young Farmers, Solanco H.S. Ag Classroom, 7:30

p.m.

Wednesday, December 16
4-H Learn and Earn For Fun and Profit program, Berks County Ag Center, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Maryland Dairy Task Force Listening Session, Ramada Inn, Hagerstown, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Thursday, December 17
Agriculture Issues Forum, Kreider's Restaurant, Manheim, 7.30 a.m.-9 a.m.
Mid-Atlantic Conservation Tillage Conference, Embers Inn and Convention Center, Carlisle.

Pa. Holstein board of directors' meeting, State College, 10:30 a.m.

Forage School, Grove City, Intermediate Unit, repeats Dec. 22.

EAYFA Family Christmas Program, Ephrata Senior High School, 7:30 p.m.

Friday, December 18
Pa. Seedsmen's Association annual meeting, Eden Resort Inn, Lancaster, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Saturday, December 19

Sunday, December 20

Monday, December 21

Tuesday, December 22
Forage School, Grove City Intermediate Unit.



NOW IS THE TIME
By John Schwartz
Lancaster County Agricultural Agent

To Consider Milk Assessment
Will you be shipping less milk this year than last year? If so, you may be eligible for a refund of the 13.65 cents per hundredweight (cwt.) assessment the government has been deducting from your milk check.

For a 60-cow herd, this refund could be around \$1,200 to \$1,500. If your production is running close to last year's, it might pay you to dry off or cull some cows in December in order to reduce your production to a level that will qualify for a refund. Before you do this, check with your local Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) office to verify your eligibility.

Glenn Shirk, extension dairy agent, reminds us that you cannot afford to give up too much production for the purpose of qualifying for the refund. If milk is \$13 per cwt., you lose \$130 of income for each 1,000-pound reduction in milk sold. This is the equivalent to one month's production from a 33-pound producer.

To Produce Drug-Free Milk
Our goal in agriculture is to produce drug-free products. This is especially true for the dairy industry. For the most part, we are doing an excellent job of this. However, we need to achieve this goal if we are to maintain consumer confidence in our products.

During the first six months of 1992, the Food and Drug Administration has randomly pulled 52,618 samples of milk from retail stores across the country and tested them for drug residues. Only 4 samples had residues in excess of 10 parts per billion.

We need to be constantly monitoring the cows being treated and keeping their milk from contaminating the regular milk. Dilution will not mask contaminated milk.

Corn Silage Clinic, Hegins Fire Hall, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Maryland Dairy Task Force Listening Session, Carroll County Ag Center, Westminster, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Wednesday, December 23
Maryland Dairy Task Force Listening Session, Howard Johnson Lodge, Millington, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Thursday, December 24
Hay Auction, Westmoreland Fairgrounds, 11 a.m.

Friday, December 25
Merry Christmas!

Friday, January 1
Happy New Year!

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Current testing procedures will detect the smallest quantity of a drug. Also, we need to maintain our practice of testing each truck-load of milk for drug residues.

By maintaining high quality standards, we are protecting our products' reputation and keeping our consumers.

To Fill Out The Agricultural Census
Farmers are now receiving their Agricultural Census forms. Please take time and fill the forms out correctly.

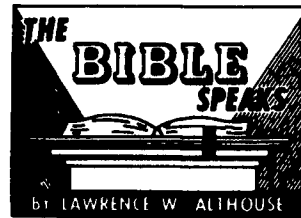
The information gathered is very important to agriculture and is used by farm leaders, agricultural

organizations, businesses, and government for making decisions.

Incomplete or inaccurate information will create bad decisions and poor farm policy. Accurate information is needed to evaluate the economic impact farm policies will have on agriculture, to identify agricultural issues and develop programs to address these issues, and help the nonfarm segment to understand the importance of agriculture to our country.

By filling out the agricultural census, you are helping to keep agriculture a growing industry.

Feather Prof's Footnote: "We cannot direct the wind but we can adjust the sails."



WHEN SHALL WE STOP PRAYING?
December 13, 1992

Background Scripture:

Luke 1:1-25.

Devotional Reading:

Luke 1:67-79.

There are some who pray much in the same way that they mail order merchandise from Sears or Spiegels. For them, prayer is like a shopping list of needs that God is obligated to fulfill. At the other extreme are those who believe that prayer is useless, an exercise in futility. In between those two polarities is where you and I probably find ourselves: not so arrogant that we believe God cannot and will not refuse our request, nor so skeptical as to believe that it accomplishes nothing.

The problem with many of us is pretty much what it was with Zechariah, the Jewish priest who became the father of John the Baptist. We don't know how long Zechariah and Elizabeth prayed for a son, but as Luke says "both were advanced in years," we can assume that for quite a few decades they had prayed fervently and nothing happened.

NO ANSWER?

Have you ever prayed for something day after day, month after month, year after year, but without anything you could interpret as an answer? I have. For at least three decades, I have prayed daily for the healing of a loved one's troubled soul. If there has been any result of my prayer, I have not noticed it. In fact, quite to the contrary. It is not a selfish or unusual request. I know that God wants that person whole as much and even more than I do. Is it beyond the power of God? No. Maybe I'm not praying rightly or perhaps I am not worthy for God to answer this prayer? No, I don't think that is it either. God doesn't answer prayer because we are worthy and only humans worry about prayer being the "right way". In fact, in Luke 1 we find that Zechariah and Elizabeth "were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But they had no child..." (1:6,7).

So it does not follow that God will answer the prayers of his "good" children and turn a deaf

ear to those who are "bad". Human transactions and relationships may work that way, but not with God. Answered prayer is always a matter of grace: not because we are good, but in spite of the fact that we are not. Goodness may be rewarded, but a reward is never guaranteed. So, for me, prayer is always a mystery. Just when I think I know how best to pray, just when I think I have it all figured out, I am brought face to face with the realization that I don't know as much as I think I do.

YOUR PRAYER IS HEARD!

Zechariah's experience in the temple is always a spiritual tonic for me. When I wonder whether the God of the universe could possibly be hearing my prayers, I read the angel's assurance to both Zechariah and all of us, "Do not be afraid...for your prayer is heard..." (1:13). All of us need to be reassured that our prayers are heard and regarded by God, that in praying we are not speaking empty words to ourselves. Zechariah was assured, not only that his prayer was heard, but that his wife would bear a child that was to be a special servant of God.

So, should all barren couples believe that they are guaranteed that someday there will be a child born to them? No, that is a guarantee that prayer cannot and will not make. What is guaranteed is that God has heard the prayer and will do something about it. The purpose of our prayer will be fulfilled, but the letter of the prayer may not be. We will get our heart's desire, but it may not be in the form we have asked for. We are not God and therefore we do not always know what we really need.

So, although I have not yet penetrated the mystery of prayer and seen the results of my years of praying one special request, I will continue to pray, assured that God does hear my prayer and cares enough for me to answer that prayer, even though I may not see or understand the answer when it comes.

When shall I stop praying? Never!

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