



## OPINION

### Challenging And Exciting

America's food and agriculture system is one of the world's richest resources, thanks in part to the American entrepreneurial spirit displayed throughout its history. According to Richard Brown, president, New Jersey's Gloucester County Board of Agriculture, a key to American agriculture's efficiency and productivity has been its ability to be open to new ideas, to be risk takers and entrepreneurs and to be effective and skillful managers.

It's appropriate that Agriculture Week (March 14-20 and Agriculture Day (March 20) coincide with the vernal equinox, the first day of spring and the beginning of a new growing season. While the big snow storm this week has our attention bound to related winter activities, it will not be long before the snow is gone and preparation for spring planting will begin.

Robert Leiby and David Dunbar, Lehigh County agents, say that because so many people are separated from production agriculture, they forget how food and natural fibers are produced. This distance comes because of lack of experience with agricultural processes and by complex marketing systems.

In the United States, one farmer produces enough food and fiber for 128 people. This is quite different from other countries where families often have a cow, a small flock of laying hens and a large vegetable garden. Our consumers are able to buy a wonderful variety of foods throughout the year and we spend only about ten percent of our disposable income on food.

Each year, Pennsylvania's agriculture generates a \$3.8 billion income and an additional \$38 billion in related economic activity, including processing, marketing, and transportation.

And agriculture continues to grow and meet the new challenges of today. Just within the last year, we have seen a number of technical breakthroughs including corn able to produce a biodegradable plastic. What scientists see in the future of agriculture is mind-boggling.

Farmers continue to increase both the quality and quantity of their production while they work to develop and maintain systems that are sustainable and environmentally sound. The future of agriculture is not only challenging but also exciting.

## Farm Calendar

### Saturday, March 20 Spring Begins National Ag Day

Agricultural Industry Dinner, John M. Clayton Hall, University of Delaware, Newark, 6 p.m.  
Women and Horses Inaugural Conference and National Tour, Cook Center, Cook College Campus, New Brunswick, N.J.  
Grapevine Pruning Training and Pest Control, Naylor Wine Cellars, Stewartstown, 10 a.m.-noon.  
Ephrata Young Farmers Craft Show, Ephrata Senior H.S., 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

### Sunday, March 21

Home Horticultural Seminar, Vegetables For All, Farm and Home Center, 7 p.m.-9:30 p.m.  
Farm Safety Series, North Jackson Grange, Myerstown, 7:30 p.m.

### Tuesday, March 23

Large Dairy Herd Conference, Embers Inn and Convention Center, Carlisle, thru March 24.  
Pesticide Safety, Farm and Home Center, 1 p.m.-3 p.m.  
Pesticide Label Changes For '93, Farm and Home Center, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.  
Livestock Facilities Planning Workshop, Sheraton North, Country Inn, West Lebanon, New Hampshire, thru March 24.  
Clarion Co. Farm Safety Demonstration, Clarion Co. Park, 7:30

p.m.-9 p.m.  
Pork producers meeting, Mercer Co. Extension Center, 7:30 p.m.

Grain Establishment and Pest Control Clinic, Penn State Schuylkill Campus, Schuylkill Haven, 6:30 p.m.-9 p.m.  
Central Md. Beef Management Short Course, Eldersberg Public Library, 7:30 p.m.-9:45 p.m., continues March 30.  
Westmoreland Co. Hay and Grain Sale, Westmoreland Fairgrounds, 11 a.m.

Pasture cross-fencing demonstration, Westmoreland Fairgrounds.  
Dairy Herd Management — Milk Residue, Ephrata H.S. Ag Dept., 7:45 p.m.

### Wednesday, March 24

Delmarva Hatchery and Breeder Flock Management Short Course, Delmarva Convention Center, Delmar, Md.  
Pesticide applicators meeting, Lebanon Valley Ag Center.  
Farm Labor Strategies Workshop, Harvest Drive Restaurant, Intercourse, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.  
Pesticide safety, Lebanon Co. extension, 1 p.m.-3 p.m.  
Pesticide Label Changes for '93, Lebanon Co. extension, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.  
Pa. DHIA records training, White Horse Fire Hall, 12:30 p.m. and Lancaster Farm and Home Center, 7:15 p.m.  
Pa. Cattlemen's Association annu-



## NOW IS THE TIME

By John Schwartz  
Lancaster County  
Agricultural Agent

### To Look At Closely Trimmed Beef

For the beef industry to stay competitive, the packing industry is introducing a 1/4-inch trim product to the retailer.

A major factor contributing to the adoption of a closely trimmed product is the competition from the warehouse clubs, which forced retailers to lower costs. Closely trimmed product reduces the amount of labor needed to retail meat.

According to Chester Hughes, extension livestock agent, "Cattle feeders will be surprised at how fast 1/4 trim and everything it implies will impact the sale and price of cattle."

He said that as 1/4-inch trim becomes more common, it will force packers to pass value differences (premiums and discounts) back to the producer.

Fat trimming is going to move the industry to value-based marketing. Producers will not be producing fat because there is no market for it and they will be paid on the basis of lean production.

It is estimated within two years, 50 percent of all boxed beef will be 1/4 trim and the other 50 percent will be in another five years. Close trimming will also pave the way for tray-ready and then branded products.

Based on carcass data from the 4-H beef program, outstanding 4-H members are producing leaner and higher quality beef than five years ago.

Now is the time to learn how to produce high quality, lean beef if you want to stay in the beef industry. The net effect will be to increase beef's quality and competitiveness in the meat case.

al meeting, Tofrees Resort, State College, 4 p.m.  
Atlantic Breeders Cooperative annual meeting, Eden Resort Inn and Conference Center, Lancaster, 10:30 a.m.

Pa. Dairy Princess promotion meeting, N.W. district, Clarion Clipper, Clarion, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.  
Estate Planning Clinic, Messiah Lutheran Church, South Williamsport, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

### Thursday, March 25

Pa. Beef Expo, Ag Arena, Penn State, thru March 28.  
Cornell Swine School, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., thru March 26.  
Dairy-MAP, financial management, REA Building, Cambridge Springs, continues April 1.  
Solanco Young Farmers awards banquet, Methodist Church, Quarryville, 7 p.m.  
Northumberland Co. Conservation

(Turn to Page A11)

### To Raise Sheep With Beef

Chester Hughes, extension livestock agent, believes there are economical and biological advantages to adding sheep to a beef cattle operation. He reminds us lamb prices tend to go up when beef prices fall and vice versa.

Sheep prefer finer plants and cattle coarser ones — therefore, sharing pastures works well. Sheep may be fed out to market on forage alone if quality is adequate, thus requiring little outlay for feed.

There are many acres of idle pasture land that could be used for sheep. As long as sheep are protected from predators, natural meadowland, waterways, woods, orchards or abandoned cropland may be utilized for sheep.

Labor requirements are about two hours of work per year to maintain one ewe and her offspring on farm pasture.

In addition to the sale of commercial slaughter lambs, other marketing opportunities could include freezer lambs, hot house lambs, white wool, naturally dark colored wool, wool products, lambskins, and even sheep milk

products.

### To Develop Sacrifice Lots

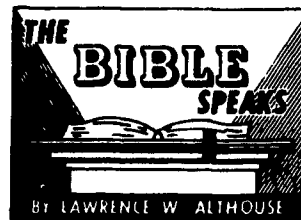
There is probably nothing more damaging to pastures than overstocking them and neglecting them.

To give your pastures an opportunity to become more productive, consider the establishment of sacrifice lots. These are smaller, fenced off sections of pasture located close to the barn and seeded to a rugged grass such as Kentucky 31 tall fescue. This is not a grazing grass but will stand up better to heavier stocking rates.

A sacrifice lot is a place to confine cows outside while protecting your prime grazing lands. Sacrifice lots may be overstocked, too. So, it may be necessary to have a concrete lot where cows may be temporarily confined, especially during wet periods.

Having more than one sacrifice lot gives you the flexibility of allowing one to recuperate while another one is being used.

*Feather Prof's Footnote: "In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity." — Albert Einstein.*



ARE WE ALSO  
BLIND?  
March 21, 1993

### Background Scripture:

John 9.

### Devotional Reading:

John 8:48-59.

I never realized that John 9 is composed of so many questions—twelve of them, I count, in all. Some of them are vital questions to which all of us can relate.

For example, the first one to Jesus: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (9:2). That is the kind of question we still ask today: what is the meaning of human suffering? Like his own disciples and the Pharisees, many of us try to find the answer in sin. And it is true that often, when we do something wrong, someone is going to suffer for it. But, as in the book of Job, we find that suffering is not always attributable to sin; so Jesus refuses to speculate. Instead, he says, this is an opportunity for God to do something wonderful. Sometimes I can understand suffering in a specific situation, but other times I can find no reason at all. When I reach that blind alley, it is time for me to say instead, 'Here is an opportunity for God to do something wonderful.'

The next question is also a faith issue: "Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?" (9:8). A similar question was asked of his parents: "Is this your son who you say was born blind?" (9:19). When God does something wonderful we sometimes have a hard time believing it.

There is one question which was asked four times, in one form or another: "Then how were your eyes opened?" (9:10, 15, 19, 26). Instead of rejoicing in the man's healing, the Pharisees were obsessed in finding out how Jesus had done it. Why? Because they were sure he had done something wrong—like breaking the sabbath. It sounds idiotic, but I too have found people who, instead of rejoicing at something wonderful, have persisted with: "How did you

do it?" The next question, "Where is he?" (Jesus), also shows that they were more interested in attacking Jesus than in the blind man being given his sight.

"What do you say about him?" they finally asked the healed man (9:17). Failing to find Jesus to reproach him, they turned on the young man himself. They wanted him to say something which they considered blasphemous. Jesus could not be from God and so he could not have healed the man! Because Jesus did not fit into their theology, they were convinced that he was not from God. But even the young man is able to point to their folly: "If this man were not from God, he could do nothing" (9:33).

Jesus asks the next question of the young man: "Do you believe in the Son of man?" (9:35) and he counters with his own question: "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" (9:36). Like many of the questions asked in John, it is not because the questioner doesn't understand—the young man probably had come to the conclusion that Jesus was the Son of man—but because he is being cautious in arriving at his faith: "Lord, I believe."

The last question comes in two forms from the Pharisees: "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" (9:34), they ask the young man. And, "Are we also blind?" they ask Jesus. These are not requests for information, but hostile sarcasm. These men pride themselves on their correct understanding of God and his will and they are furious—and maybe a bit unnerved—at the suggestion that they are the ones who do not understand, do not "see."

And us—do we not also need to be careful when we say, "We see?" For in our smug assurance, may we not also be spiritually blind?

## Lancaster Farming

Established 1955

Published Every Saturday

Ephrata Review Building

1 E Main St.

Ephrata, PA 17522

— by —

Lancaster Farming, Inc.

A Stenman Enterprise

Robert C. Campbell General Manager  
Everett R. Newswanger Managing Editor

Copyright 1993 by Lancaster Farming