



OPINION

Well-Fed People Faced With Self-Preservation

Our fellow farmers in the Midwest, who have suffered from the floods, now face other blows: the clean-up and the environmentalists.

According to Kyle Vickers, Missouri Agriculture Department, there are at least 450,000 acres of prime farmland in Missouri alone that are covered with sand and silt, reaching depths of eight to ten feet. Owners of least 90,000 acres of worst-hit land will likely never be able to farm again because the cost to remove the sand is greater than the value of the farm.

Restoration of sand and silt-covered farmland can be accomplished by scraping off the sand or by tilling the sand into the soil. Removing the sand is too expensive, and tilling decreases the quality of the soil. The farmers are literally "caught between a rock and a hard place."

But maybe the most discouraging blow to the farmers who have suffered from the flood is that now some environmental groups have come forward to block the return of farming to the rich river bottom land. Initially the Army Corps of Engineers indicated it would pay for 80 percent of the needed repairs to levees that were damaged or destroyed in the floods. But they have already reneged on some of their promises. Many farmers believe this change of attitude toward the farm victims has come because of pressure from environmentalists who want the flood plains in something other than agriculture.

Here's just another report of opponents of agriculture using political and regulatory powers to achieve goals that will destroy agriculture, the foundation of the nation. As we see the food production system in America under attack from so many sides, we can't help ask: "How soon will the grocery shelves in food markets be bare?"

When this starts to happen, the riots in the streets from well-fed people suddenly faced with self-preservation will not be a pretty sight.

Farm Calendar



Saturday, October 30

Nittany Lion Fall Classic Sale, Ag Arena, State College, 11 a.m.
Goat Health Conference, Penn State, University Park, 8 a.m.

Sunday, October 31

Halloween
Eastern Standard Time Begins

Federal Crop Insurance Program (wheat, oats, barley, rye) closing date.

Monday, November 1

Estate Planning Workshop, First UCC Church, Schuylkill Haven, 7 p.m., also Nov. 8 and 15.

Lancaster County Sheep and Wool Growers Association annual meeting, Lancaster Farm and Home Center, 7 p.m.

Central Susquehanna Valley greenhouse tour and meeting, Mitterling Greenhouses, Lewisburg, 4 p.m.

Tuesday, November 2

Pa. Council of Cooperatives 1993 annual meeting, Penn State Nittany Lion Inn, thru Nov. 3.

Solanco Young Farmers meeting, corn grain management.

Lancaster County Holstein banquet, Family Style Restaurant, Lancaster, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, November 3

State Conservation Commission nutrient management advisory board meeting, Ag Building, Harrisburg, 9:30 a.m.
Juniata County Conservation Field Day tour, bus departs Ag Service Center, Mifflintown, 8:30 a.m.

Thursday, November 4

Dauphin Co. Fall Field Day, Milton Hershey School Farm Tech Center, Hershey, 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

Fayette County Holstein Association annual meeting, Shady Side Inn, Uniontown, 7 p.m.

Wyoming County Extension annual dinner meeting, Moose Lodge, Tunkhannock, 7 p.m.

Bradford County Extension annual meeting, Wysox Presbyterian Church, 7:45 p.m.

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Farm Forum

Editor:

NAFTA: The Issue Is Sovereignty.

The North American Free Trade Agreement isn't about free trade. It will not abolish restrictions on trade in North America, but rather creates 32 appointed international committees, councils, working groups, secretariats, and subcommittees to rule on trade matters previously the sole domain of the elected U.S. Congress. In fact, the Clinton Administration's side agreements would make NAFTA a net inhibitor of trade.

According to U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor's August 17th Wall Street Journal column, NAFTA's side agreement on the environment would lock in forever all existing federal environmental regulations, no matter how expensive or oppressive: "no

country in the agreement can lower its environmental standards — ever."

It certainly says something about the real intention of many NAFTA supporters when they stipulate that regulations can never be eased or abolished.

Despite the fact that the details of financing the U.S.-Mexican Border Commission are not nailed down, U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor announced at a September 15th press conference that the NAFTA side agreements include an outstanding that the United States would supply nearly \$8 billion in foreign aid.

I compare NAFTA to President Clinton's budget package, which raised taxes immediately and promised future spending cuts unlikely ever to materialize. NAFTA raises an army of trade-

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NOW IS THE TIME
By John Schwartz
Lancaster County
Agricultural Agent

To Use Old Tires For Bedding

Dairy farmers are continually looking for ways to improve cow comfort and cleanliness, while also reducing bedding requirements and labor demands.

According to Glenn Shirk, extension dairy agent, one way to accomplish this is to use old tires. For a number of years, old tires have been used in freestalls, by partially imbedding them in earth or concrete and covering them with bedding.

The tires keep cows from gouging holes in earthen stall beds and they help retain bedding in the stalls. These two factors contributed to the comfort and cleanliness of cows.

Shirk reports a more recent concept has drawn a lot of interest. This new use of used tires calls for placing a 4- to 6-inch layer of chopped or shredded tire rubber in the base of cow stalls and covering it with a tough nylon-like fabric, which is then covered with a light application of bedding.

The chopped rubber is inert and does not decay, and it provides a soft, resilient cushion for cows.

To Exercise Horses

One of the most common mismanagement practices of today's horse owner is infrequent exercise for pleasure horses.

Horses used for work and transportation receive daily exercise. However, the confined horse is more susceptible to poor health because of lack of activity.

A vigorous workout for about 30 minutes per day is necessary for the confined horse to maintain proper muscle tone and reduce boredom. Boredom often causes wood chewing, cribbing, stall kicking, stall weaving, and pacing.

Once one of these vices is acquired, it is difficult or impossible to break the habit. Make sure your pleasure horse receives your daily attention and exercise.

To Become Better Before Bigger

Many people believe that you must become bigger in order to become profitable.

This is not true. Profitability is determined by controlling costs and receiving the highest price for your product. Size may be a factor, but it is not the only factor.

A recent study by Kansas State University points this out. Economists analyzed data from 91 farrow-to-finish operations in Kansas for the year 1992. This study included farms with 650 liters or less per year.

The greatest profit differences were within herds of the same size than between herds of different sizes. The study then divided the herds into the top third and bottom third based on profit (return over cost).

Some interesting differences are evident. The top third farms weaned 0.7 more pigs per litter and

marketed 338 more pounds per litter. Feed costs were \$55 lower per cwt of hogs produced, and total costs were \$142 less per cwt produced.

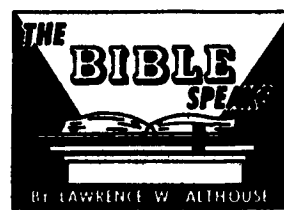
Some factors involved are better feed conversion, more hogs marketed per litter, conception rates, and management efficiencies.

This follows a similar observation with laying hens, where there is as much as 5 cent per dozen difference in price received by farmers in one week. This difference is due to the number of cracks and dirty eggs.

These studies point out it is management, not size, that determines profitability. Examine your operation and look for ways to increase productivity, reduce costs, and improve product quality.

There are many excellent people available to help you. Solicit their advice and make the necessary changes to insure you are in the top 10 percent of the farmers for your commodity.

Feather Prof's Footnote: "Every private citizen has a public responsibility." Make sure you vote this Tuesday.



"GOOD GUYS"
vs.
"BAD GUYS"
October 31, 1993

Background Scripture:
Genesis 25: 19-34
Devotional Reading:
Genesis 25: 19-34

The story of Jacob and Esau is not a story about a "good guy" versus a "bad guy". Neither of them is wholly "good" nor "bad". Both of them are very much like real people we all know.

The difference between them was not moral superiority — the Bible does not indicate that one was more righteous than the other. Although they were twins, there was nothing identical about them. They were simply different in almost every way. They looked different from minute-one. Esau was red and hairy. (His name is a play on both these characteristics — "red" is a play on the word Edom, the nation that Esau would found, and "hairy" is a play on the name Seir, the region of the Edomites.) Jacob, in contrast, was not a hairy man. (His name, Jacob, was a play on the word "heel" or "he supplants" — a reference to the fact that as they were born, Jacob was grasping the heel of Esau and eventually supplanted him.) In the womb, it seemed to Rebekah that these two unborn children were already contending with one another.

Even their vocations typified two very different ways of life. Esau was the macho hunter, "a man of the field," while Jacob "was a quiet man, dwelling in tents" (25:27,28). There is nothing wrong with either vocation or lifestyle; they are simply different — although the Israelites traditionally identified more with the shepherds than the hunters — and the two styles of life sometimes clashed.

DIFFERENT TEMPERAMENTS

Furthermore, Esau and Jacob were different temperamentally. Esau was a man of the flesh; physical things were basic with him, like hunger or thirst. He was not

ambitious to get ahead; he lived pretty much day to day. Jacob, by contrast, was a man who lived by his intelligence rather than his physical might. He was crafty and he did plan and scheme ahead. He knew what he wanted and was determined to get it.

There was a difference even in parental favor. This is not a case of the "good" parent against the "bad" parent. Both of them are very much like real parents today. Without planning it that way, Isaac favored Esau and Rebekah favored Jacob. The writer of this story suggests that Esau was like Isaac, while Jacob was more like his mother.

In the passage where Jacob cons Esau out of his birthright, it is again not a case of the "good guy" and the "bad guy". On the one hand, we fault Esau for being so careless and stupid to give up his birthright for the sake of something to eat. He didn't seem to have any sense of value. On the other hand, we can fault Jacob for being so conniving as to take advantage of his brother's stupidity.

VALUE & SIN

That's the way it is with people today. Often, it is not a case of the righteous versus the unrighteous, but that people are different and imperfect. There is value and sin in every life. Even so, God can use each of us to achieve his purpose. Jacob, despite his dishonesty, has the capacity to be the father of the tribes of Israel. And Esau, despite his limitations, will be the father of the Edomites.

In emphasizing their differences, we must not overlook their similarities. They had the same mother and father and they came from the same family. Different as they were, they ultimately had the capacity to recognize their bonds as well as their differences.

So, in our own families there are the same potentials and pitfalls. But God can use and bless all of us — and does.

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