



OPINION

The Process Of Developing Consensus

A hint of believable grassroots farmer opinion has been reported out of the Penn State University College of Agriculture. (See Page A1 this issue.) The survey's results offer verifiable and testable means of supporting statements presented as fact.

This is often not the case.

With the increased number of conflicting opinions among farm groups that have appeared on the scene in the past decade, it gets very difficult to get to the bottom line about who is actually being represented by whom, and what positions are, in fact, widely supported.

The increased use of facsimile communications, computer links, desk-top publishing and low-cost publicity services have made it more and more difficult to discern between legitimate claims of farmer representation and ballyhoo.

That presents a challenge to us all to work a little harder at being able to sift through the dogma to discover fact, and to not always believe what we read, or what a friend says is fact.

This challenge of course is always present, but current and planned communications technology makes it much easier for fewer and fewer individuals to influence the knowledge of the public, to twist facts and to alter public policy for their own benefit.

It used to be that a good rule of thumb that only organizations with a substantial membership could afford the postage and fancy letterhead and professionally written news releases. No more.

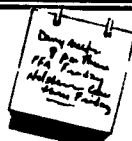
Now, with a little startup money and some relatively inexpensive technology, fewer than a handful of people can successfully operate "non-profit, grass-roots organizations" that purport to represent the opinions and policy desires of an unsubstantiated "large majority."

While this may not seem significant, consider the effect the numerous anti-agriculture organizations have had in misinforming and misleading the public; consider the hardships endured by the apple industry over some unsubstantiated claims made by only a few people; consider the Dr. Spock snafu and the effects it has had, etc..

And there are many, many more incidents of individuals and small groups that say they speak for and are supported by hundreds of thousands or even millions of other people.

The PSU survey sampling represents roughly 10-percent of the dairy farm owners in the state, which is far from a total consensus. Even so, while the facts resulting from the survey may or may not be indicative of the desires of the majority of the state's dairy producers, it is refreshingly substantive, straightforward, and it offers an alternative process to develop consensus.

Farm Calendar



Saturday, November 6

North American International Livestock Expo, Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center, Louisville, Ky., thru Nov. 19.

Pa. Community Supported Ag Workshop, Dauphin County Ag and Natural Resources Center, Dauphin, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Pa. Bison Association Buffalo Auction, Mercer Livestock Market, 1 p.m.

Berks County Holstein Association annual meeting, Virginville Grange, Virginville, 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, November 7

Monday, November 8

Poultry Management and Health Seminar, Kreider's Restaurant, Manheim, noon.

Dauphin County Extension annual meeting, Ag and Natural Resources Center, Dauphin, 7 p.m.

Lebanon County Extension banquet, Myerstown Church of the Brethren, 7 p.m.

Warren County Cooperative Extension water quality meeting, Sheffield High School, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.

Northumberland County Cooperative Extension annual meeting, Otterbein U. Methodist Church, Sunbury, 6:30 p.m.

Field Hearing On Rural Health, Cumberland County Extension Office, 11 a.m.

Tuesday, November 9

N.W. Pa. Beef Producers Workshop, Edinboro Community Center, Edinboro, 7 p.m.-9:15 p.m., thru November 10.

Centre County Farm-City Banquet, Penns Valley Area High School, Spring Mills, 7 p.m.

Intensive grazing management systems meeting, Lehigh County Ag Center, Allentown, 7:30 p.m.

1993 Equine School, North Hunterdon High School, Clinton, N.J., 7:30 p.m.

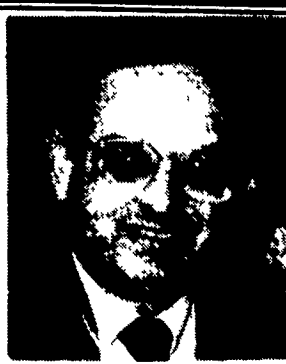
Wednesday, November 10

National FFA Convention, Kansas City, Mo., thru November 14.

Westmoreland County Farm-City Night, Mount View Inn, Greensburg, 7 p.m.

ADADC District 8 meeting, Hidden Inn, South Kortright, N.Y., 8 p.m.

Chester County Extension annual meeting, Government Services



NOW IS THE TIME

By John Schwartz
Lancaster County
Agricultural Agent

To Test Forages

According to Glenn Shirk, extension dairy agent, high producing cows, dry cows, and heifers require rations that are properly balanced.

He said, "There is little room for error." Failure to provide the proper ration may result in calving difficulties, metabolic diseases, depressed appetites, reduced production, lower conception rates, and more problems with infections, lameness, etc.

Good feeding starts with good quality feed. Forages are a major part of the ration. However, the quality of forages may vary considerably.

The best indicator of forage quality is a forage test. To increase the accuracy of forage test results, be sure to submit a representative sample of the forages to be tested. Remember the accuracy of the forage tests will be no more accurate than the sample submitted.

To Work With Your Nutritionist

Nutrition is still both an art and a science. Experienced nutritionists will use feed and forage tests as a guide in developing rations. They rely on the test results as an original guide for balancing rations and then make adjustments as their experience and herd or flock performances dictate.

To increase the accuracy of the feed program, be sure to provide your nutritionist with accurate feed intakes and body weights.

Farmers work with three feed programs. They are: 1. The one that appears on the computer print-out or recommended by the nutritionist; 2. The one delivered to the animal; and 3. the one the animal actually eats.

The only one that counts is the one the animal consumes, and it may be very different than the other two. Thus, it is important to know what the animals actually consume.

To accomplish this, develop a method to weigh what is feed and deduct what is wasted or refused. The balance is what is consumed. Be sure to share this figure with your nutritionist or service person so feeding recommendations may be based on accurate intakes.

Also, moisture content of feeds,

Center, West Chester, 7 p.m.

Pa. Veterinary Nutrition Forum, Days Inn, Lancaster.

Maryland's 49th annual Dairy Technology Conference at College Park Holiday Inn.

1993 Equine School, Holiday Inn, Bethlehem, 7:30 p.m.

Fall barn meeting, Romar Jersey Farm, New Wilmington, 1 p.m.

Western Pa. Flower Growers annual bedding plant clinic,

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especially ensiled feeds, may change from time to time. Farmers should have on-farm moisture testers to monitor moisture levels and dry matter intakes more accurately.

Then, appropriate adjustments need to be made to the ration. It is also advisable to test the final feed mix and take feed samples at different locations in the feed trough or occasionally to check on the accuracy of feed mixing and feed particle separation during feeding.

To Be Kind To Calves

The cool wet days of fall are upon us and winter is on its way. Thus, it is time to focus on how to keep calves healthy and comfortable this winter.

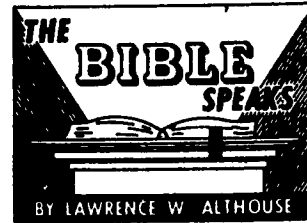
First and most important is help-

ing the calf develop its own natural immune system. Do this by making sure the calf consumes at least one gallon of good quality colostrum milk within the first 12 hours after birth (the sooner, the better).

Then place the calf in an individual pen that is dry, well bedded, draft-free, well ventilated, and located away from older cattle. If you are using calf hutches, place them on an elevated, well drained mound and orient the open end to the southeast.

To help calves maintain body fat and normal body temperatures, be sure to feed them adequate energy in the form of high quality, high energy milk replacers or feed them more milk or more grain.

Feather Prof's Footnote: "Recall it as often as you wish, a happy memory never wears out."



TRUTH OR
CONSEQUENCES
November 7, 1993

Background Scripture:

Genesis 27

Devotional Reading:

Hebrews 12:14-17

The story of Jacob and Esau is the narration of an almost — perfect crime — or so it would seem. At his mother's suggestion and following her clever instructions to the letter, Jacob tricked his father, Isaac, into thinking he was his brother and stole the blessing that Isaac had intended for Esau.

Of course there were some uneasy moments and close calls. When Jacob enters his father's tent, Isaac, calls out: "Here I am; who are you my son?" Some people would have failed right there. Then Isaac says, "How is it that you have found it so quickly (the wild game), my son." Jacob was quick with a good reply. Was Isaac just a bit suspicious here? It would seem so, for he says: "Come near that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not." If Jacob was the nervous kind, he must have really become unhinged when Isaac having felt Jacob's hands, said: "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are those of Esau... Are you really my son Esau?" (27:18-21).

But if Jacob was scared, he carried off the deception without faltering, "I am." And so Isaac accepted that the son seeking his blessing was Esau. Jacob had pulled it off! Isaac never suspected. He did not even become aware of his second son's duplicity until later when Esau came storming into Isaac's presence, asking for a blessing.

IN THE CLEAR

In patriarchal times, a spoken blessing, like a spoken curse, was believed to have irrevocable power. Once spoken, it could not be recalled or taken back. The spoken word, particularly of a dying man, had cosmic as well as legal power. That is something quiet alien to us. In today's world, if Isaac had been deceived into blessing the wrong son, we would say, "Don't worry, this is not binding. Nothing gained by fraud has legal or actual standing. But in the time of Isaac, Jacob, and Esau, the blessing was more than mere words.

Since the blessing could not be rescinded, Jacob was in the clear. He stayed out of Esau's way, and

when his brother vowed vengeance, Jacob let his mother persuade him to visit some relatives far from the reach of his furious brother. It would appear he had gotten away with it.

But did he? Inasmuch as Jacob and Esau were eventually reconciled many years later, it would appear that there were no lasting consequences of Jacob's cruel deception. If we look more closely, however, we can see that there were some serious consequences. We cannot know for sure, but the story seems to suggest that when Jacob finally returns to his native home, Rebekah, his mother was dead. So, this woman who loved Jacob best of all never got to see her son again. This was one of the consequences of their dead.

CONSEQUENCES

Another consequence was the hatred of his brother. Even though Esau eventually conquered that hatred, still it cost both him and Jacob a lot during all of those years in which they were estranged. Yes, it is wonderful that eventually they were reunited, but what of all the years in between that they lost? And it certainly cost Isaac something, if nothing more than his peace of mind — to think that his own son would practice such a deception upon him! To know that he had been duped into denying the blessing to his favorite and first-born son. Furthermore, it is unlikely that Jacob was ever able to collect on the blessing and the birthright he had taken from Esau. The Bible doesn't tell us this specifically, but it does not mention or even suggest that Jacob ever returned to claim his ill-gotten gains.

Did God forgive Isaac and Rebekah for the favoritism that permeated their home? Yes, I'm sure he did. Did Esau eventually forgive his scheming brother? Yes, we know that he did. And did he eventually redeem Jacob from this terrible sin? Of course. But, in between that despicable deception and the blessed reconciliation, there were many years of guilt, shame and remorse that would not go away.

Don't ever think that just because the consequences do not seem evident or especially painful that sin does not exact a heavy toll; it always has; it always will.

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