



## OPINION

### Happy New Year To Busy Farmers

The work schedule on the farm in winter may be a little less strenuous than at planting, hay making, or at silo filling time or in corn or tobacco harvest. But for livestock and dairy farmers, the extra stable chores take time, so you still have a lot to do.

In addition, at this time of year farm educational meetings at the extension office or at your farm dealership or supplier are offered. Next year's production schedule can be set, and tax records assembled.

Nutrient management plans can be put in place this winter, and soil tests should be taken. Fertilizer, lime, seeds, and pesticides should be purchased to insure they are available in the spring.

Winter is a good time to check, repair, lubricate and reset equipment. If parts are worn, they should be replaced. You want to do everything possible to reduce down time on the equipment when you are running day and night in the fields.

Cows must be clipped and other livestock kept in clean stalls. Water pipes must be kept warm.

Many people who don't know better, think farmers have nothing to do in winter. But when these consumers sit down to their next meal, we think they should know that farmers are busy all winter too. The blessings of Thanksgiving and Christmas have been experienced this year. And now we anticipate the beginning of a new year. Therefore, we wish all the busy people in agriculture a prosperous, healthful, and happy New Year.

## Farm Calendar



Saturday, January 1  
Happy New Year!

Sunday, January 2

Monday, January 3

Tuesday, January 4

Mercer County DHI annual meeting.

New Jersey Farm Bureau Dairy Summit, Tranquility Church, Tranquility, N.J., 10 a.m.-3 p.m., continues Jan. 6.

Leola Produce Auction meeting, Bareville Fire Hall, Leola, 12:30 p.m.

Raleigh DHIA Records Workshop, Amos Stoltzfus Farm, Honey Brook, 12:30 p.m.

Mid-Atlantic Nurserymen's Trade Conference, Baltimore, Md., thru Jan. 6.

Berks County Dairy Day, Extension Office, Leesport.

Adams County Dairy Day, Extension Office, Gettysburg, 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Solanco Young Farmers pesticide recertification meeting, Solanco High School, 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, January 5

Lancaster County Conservation District annual meeting, Stock Yard Inn, 6 p.m.

Bucks/Montgomery Dairy Day, Family Heritage Restaurant, Franconia, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Franklin County Dairy Day, Kauffman's Community Center, Chambersburg, 9:30 a.m.-2:40 p.m.

Milk Marketing Board Sunshine Meeting, Pa. Dept. of Ag, Harrisburg.

Thursday, January 6

Pa. State Farm Show, judging only.

Mercer County pesticide meeting, Elder Sales and Service, (Turn to Page A27)

## Farm Forum

Editor,

Have you ever sat by and watched your best friend die?

However crushing it might have been it cannot compare to the devastation one experiences when death comes as a result of irresponsibility.

Rocky, my Golden Retriever, a beloved Father's Day gift given to me in the mid-eighties, is at my side, stricken with heartworms, not far from death.

It could easily have been avoided and I been diligent as a pet owner and put him on the regimen recommended by virtually every licensed veterinarian. This mosquito borne parasite has also invaded the systems of three other dogs of mine, but because they are relatively young and robust, they are successfully recuperating from

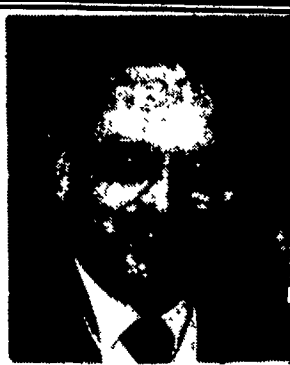
the sometimes fatal treatment.

I used to pride myself as an animal lover but this is no longer the case. Sure, I hug them constantly, give them treats (probably too often), let them take advantage of me—even share my bed with them from time to time. But these indulgences can only be part of a commitment.

The picture cannot be labeled "love" when their care is compromised. "Spoiling them rotten" means little if their well-being is neglected. Ignoring the necessity of regular checkups, periodic vaccinations and parasite control is to debase the meaning of animal love.

Certainly, I can and do reflect on all the wonderful times Rocky and I have had together; how he

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## NOW IS THE TIME

By John Schwartz  
Lancaster County  
Agricultural Agent

### To Study New Sire Information

According to Glenn Shirk, extension dairy agent, the new sire rankings published in January 1994 will contain new information.

This new information will include predicted transmitting ability (PTA) for somatic cell score (SCS) and for productive life (PL).

PTA SCS indicates how well udder health qualities are transmitted to offspring. PTA PL indicates how well longevity traits are transmitted.

Cow summaries will begin to contain this new information in July 1994. Also to be included in the new summaries is the net merit (NM) index. This new index combines the economic impact of somatic cell scores and productive life with the value of the milk, the fat, and the protein produced.

Dairy breeders should find this new information helpful as they search for the best genetics for upgrading their herds.

### To Look At Farm Numbers

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy reported that the nation continues to lose about one percent of its farms each year or about 23,000 farms.

According to Espy, most of these are small farms less than 500 acres in size which no longer produce sufficient income to support the farm family. Espy also stated that 85 percent of the nation's agricultural output comes from 15 percent of the nation's farms.

This same trend may be seen in Pennsylvania. Between June 1, 1992 and June 1, 1993, Pennsylvania lost about 1,000 farms. This represents a decline of slightly less than two percent. In Pennsylvania, about 48 percent of the farms are less than 75 acres in size with an average gross sales of about \$74.50 per acre. Thirty-six percent of the farms have an average size of 178 acres and average gross sales of \$308 per acre, while 16 percent of the farms have an average size of more than 350 acres with an average gross sale of more than \$575 per acre.

### To Evaluate Future In Farming

With the beginning of a New Year, now is a good time to evaluate your future in farming.

With the increased productivity and efficiency in agriculture, farmers need to continue to grow and be better.

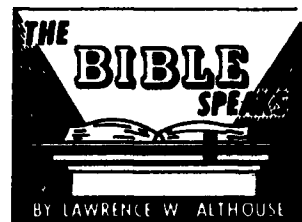
There are several factors that determine the size of a farm. One is

the number of acres. The other is the speed with which we may harvest our crops or livestock and poultry production. The number of cows you are able to milk in an hour, the number of eggs you may pack in an hour, the number of acres you are able to harvest in an hour, and the number of hogs or broilers you may slaughter in an hour, etc. determine the optimum size of your farm.

Today the major limiting factor for farm growth besides money is probably land. Society is working on defining additional minimum standards to meet environmental standards and concerns of neighbors.

Studying the income figures based on farm size indicates farmers of small farms must develop additional sources of income. This could come from many sources.

• Become a part-time farmer and have another job to supplement income and provide health, retirement, and other benefits.



GOD'S MISTAKES  
January 2, 1994

### Background Scripture:

Luke 4:16-28

### Devotional Reading:

Isaiah 61:1-2; 58:6

### Does God make mistakes?

Practically all of us would be eager to say "No!" to that question. According to our beliefs it is absolutely impossible for God to ever be in error.

Yet, though we might vehemently deny that God makes mistakes, we often act as if he does. If God had to wait for each of his acts to be ratified by a worldwide popular referendum, his will would probably never be done. Someone has said that, if God were a committee, the universe would probably never have moved beyond the "Big Bang."

The fact is, God's ways are often not our ways. And when his ways are contrary to ours, we act as if the problem is with him not with us. That's why we take our civic cues from politicians rather than from God. That's why we usually leave God out of our business lives—God doesn't seem to have a "business head." And that is also why we relegate religion to the "spiritual," rather than the pragmatic, every day side. God is a nice fellow and all of that, but in "the real world" God's ways are just too impractical.

### WHO'S THIS?

Sometimes Christians not only don't agree with God's ways, but they get downright upset about them. That's what Jesus experienced in his home town of Nazareth when he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath and read from the scroll of the Prophet Isaiah. At first, people were somewhat impressed with his reading, but then they began to question: "Is not this Joseph's son?" (Luke 4:22b). Actually, that quotation could be taken two different ways. It could mean appreciation: isn't it wonderful what our hometown boy is saying! Or, it could mean disdain: who does this local yokel think he is? Our key comes from Jesus' response: "Doubtless you will quote to me the proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself; what we

• Form partnerships with neighbors to develop a larger land base and farm size to generate needed additional income.

• Switch to higher income producing crops.

• Do more direct marketing.

• Sell or lease the farm and invest the money.

• Or use a combination of these or some other strategy you may develop.

Farming today is a business. We could learn a lot from our town business people on how they organize their businesses, methods of using outside capital, and business partnerships.

Take time now to discuss the future of farming with your family and develop a plan to achieve it. Do not forget to use the many sources of help available to you in developing your plan.

*Feather Prof's Footnote: "The happiness of your life is in direct proportion to the character of your thoughts."*

have heard you did at Capernaum, do here also in your own country". And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his own country" (Luke 4:23,24).

Obviously, Jesus did not regard their comment as a congratulation, for he knew that they did not really accept him and his mission. His local townspeople figured that, if God had chosen this man, he had made a mistake!

Jesus forced the issue to a head by citing to them two times in the history of Israel when God had bestowed his special blessings upon Gentiles instead of Jews. Keep in mind how much they despised the Gentiles. As William Barclay says in his commentary on Luke, "They believed that 'God had created the Gentiles to be fuel for the fires of hell.'" If God had specially blessed Gentiles such as Zarahath and Naaman, he had made a mistake!

### ANNOYED WITH THE GOSPEL

Now, of course, no good Jew would have ever said or allowed himself to think that God had made a mistake. But he might nevertheless have acted as if that were so. For Luke tells us, "When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath" (4:28). What were they angry about? About what God had done. Their anger showed that they disapproved of what God had done.

Does that ever happen in our churches? Yes, it does when we find ourselves annoyed when the gospel of Jesus Christ is applied to people who, unlike ourselves, "don't deserve it." We would have a similar reaction if on some Sunday morning in church someone reminded us that God had healed an errant Hindu while Christians remained unhealed.

Unfortunately, like his fellow Nazarenes, many of us think that, because we are members of this church or that, we have a claim on the goodness of God. But, in fact, the goodness of God flows wherever people are receptive to it.

As always, the mistake is not God's, but ours.

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