



OPINION

A Mandate To Treat Sinkholes

In years past, erosion ditches and sinkholes were considered places to discard junk from around the farm. Some farmers even called them "God-sends" because of the convenience these ditches and holes lent to the dumping process.

Through modern conservation practices, the erosion ditches have been tackled and conquered. Sod strips in waterways, contour farming, and no-til cultivation practices have greatly reduced soil erosion. And in many places what once was an ugly conduit of rushing muddy water in every heavy rain storm has now become a pastoral asset to the farm.

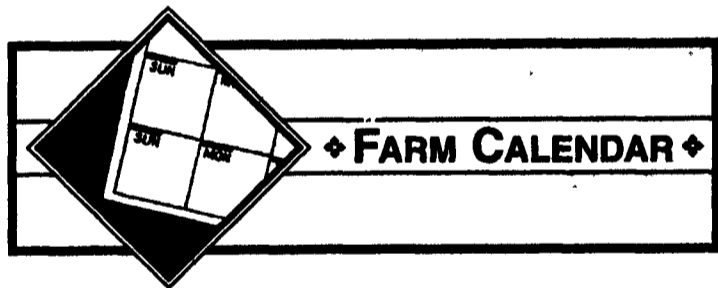
But sinkholes are still to be conquered, partly because they appear unexpectedly, and partly because farmers don't understand the environmental impact of the sinkhole.

In part two of Andy Andrews' series on the subject in this issue, Bruce Benton, a geologist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) says that many farmers may not realize that sinkholes can be a direct conduit to a water supply. So whatever you throw in a sinkhole will show up in your water supply.

Farmers remain afraid to talk about sinkhole problems because they fear DER intervention and/or costly repair costs. Actually, under a new Pequea-Mill Creek Project initiative in Lancaster County, funds are available to repair several sinkholes free of cost to use as examples of how it should be done. One of the objectives of the initiative is to identify four or five sinkholes in the watershed area that have been used as dump sites. For no charge, the project together with the help of the NRCS and the Lancaster County Conservation District, will assess, design, and implement a complete sinkhole cleanup and repair on a cooperating farm.

If you have a sinkhole, don't use it as a dump. Also be sure not to mix farm chemicals near a sinkhole or put chemical containers into it. Don't use sinkholes as outlets for drainage systems. The nutrients carried from cropfields in the drainage systems can be channeled directly into the groundwater if you do.

As sinkholes become more of a problem, our understanding of them must also increase. It's time now to treat sinkholes as we have treated the erosion ditches on our farms. To be good stewards of the land, we have a mandate to do this.



Saturday, December 3
 National 4-H Youth Congress, Orlando, Fla., thru Dec. 8.
 Estate Planning Seminar, Howard Johnson Plaza Hotel, Hagerstown, Md., 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Sunday, December 4

Monday, December 5
 Agronomy Ag Service School, Brynwood Inn, Lewisburg.
 Intensive Grazing For Dairy Cows Seminar, Franklin County extension, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
 Lehigh County annual meeting, Bake Oven Inn, Germansville, 7:30 p.m.
 Regional Vegetable Growers annual meeting, Arena Restaurant, Bedford.
 Dauphin County Ag Conservation Easement Purchase program, Ag and Natural Resources Center, 7 p.m.
 Tobacco Auction Season Opens, Paradise Tobacco Auction, 10 a.m.
 Pesticide applicator license, meeting room, Donohoe Center, Westmoreland County, 7 p.m.-10 p.m.
 Octorara Young Farmers Association meeting, welding skills, Octorara High School, 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 6
 Mid-Atlantic Cooperative Extension Meeting (MACE), University of Delaware, Newark, Del.
 Agronomy Ag Service School, Sinbad's Restaurant, Wysox.
 Lancaster County DHIA meeting, Good and Plenty Restaurant, 11:30 a.m.
 Berks County DHIA meeting, 4-H Center, Leesport, 7 p.m.
 Bradford-Sullivan Forest Landowners Association directors meeting, extension office, 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 7
 Agronomy Ag Service School, Berks county Ag Center, Leesport.
 Wayne County DHIA meeting, Bethany Church, Honesdale, 7:45 p.m.
 Clinton County DHIA meeting, Big Wrangler, Mill Hall, 11:30 a.m.
 McKean County DHIA and Holstein Club annual meeting, First Baptist Church, Port Allegany, 7:30 p.m.
 Milking Facilities Design Conference, Mercer County Extension Center, 8 p.m.

Thursday, December 8
 Extension Strategies For Dairy



Now Is The Time
 By John Schwartz
 Lancaster County Agricultural Agent

To Prepare For The 21st Century

Dr. Luther Tweeten, Ohio State University, recently stated, "Agriculture of the next decade and beyond will be technologically advanced, internationally competitive, environmentally sound, market-oriented, demand-driven, financially innovative, and managerially intensive."

If you are planning to be in agriculture for 10 or more years, you should re-read Dr. Tweeten's statement at least three more times. In one sentence, he has given one of the best predications of agriculture in the 21st century.

Agriculture has changed a lot in the last 15 years. It will change even more over the next 10 years. The future belongs to those you are able to study and adopt to these changes. The others will either leave agriculture or work for those of you who are managing change.

We are beginning the winter agriculture meeting season. There will be a wide variety of topics and subjects covered. Consider stretching your learning comfort

Farms National Conference and Trade Show, Turf Valley Hotel, Ellicott City, Md., thru Dec. 9.
 Adams County DHIA annual meeting, Fire Hall, Harney, Md., 7 p.m.

Agronomy Ag Service School, Quality Inn, Carlisle.

Centre County DHIA meeting, Logan Grange, Pleasant Gap, 7 p.m.

York County Ag Land Preservation Board annual public meeting and application workshop, York County Vo-Tech School Auditorium, 7 p.m.

Agway annual meeting, Hershey Lodge and Convention Center, Hershey, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Baltimore County Field Crops Day, Friendly Farm Restaurant, 9:45 a.m.

Commercial Vegetable Growers Seminar, Days Inn, Butler, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Friday, December 9

Agronomy Ag Service School, Lancaster Farm and Home Center.

PennAg Nutrient Management Seminar, Eden Resort Inn, Lancaster, 10 a.m.-noon.

Armstrong County DHIA meeting, Bonello, 11 a.m.

Saturday, December 10

Sunday, December 11

Monday, December 12

Tuesday, December 13

Food Safety Comes To The Farm, Broiler, Egg, and Turkey producers conference, Farm and

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zone and expose yourself to topics on risk management, financial management, business planning, goal setting, etc.

Penn State will be expanding the Dairy MAP program to enhance the dairy farmer's knowledge of managing a business. Re-read the first sentence and seek knowledge in those areas Dr. Tweeten identified.

To Balance Soil Fertility

Best management practices (BMPs) are very important to the environment.

One very important BMP is balanced soil fertility. Farmers need to optimize all their production inputs and management decisions to produce crops in a highly efficient manner.

To do this, farmers must seek the right balance in each production step. Balance means using not too little nor too much.

Proper fertilization begins with a realistic yield goal and an understanding of what the crop needs to achieve that goal. Detailed field records and soil tests are important tool to base this decision.

Balanced nutrition is a key component of high yield management. It helps ensure that all nutrients are

efficiently utilized to produce high yielding, high quality crops.

Take time now to review your field records and develop your fertilization program for 1995, taking into account yield goals and soil test results.

To Winterize Buildings

Winter is coming fast. The mild fall has allowed us to complete our fieldwork. Now is the time to turn our attention to winterizing our buildings.

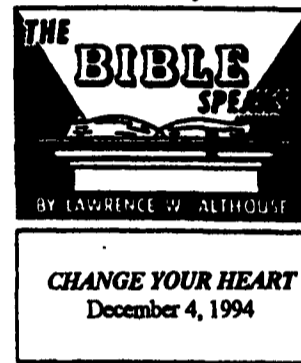
Seal cracks to prevent drafts, especially around doors and fans. Look for mice holes and close them up. Monitor for mice and keep your rodent control program active.

Check wiring for exposed wires. Drain pipes that are subject to freezing. Make repairs to siding. Check and clean heating systems, including chimneys and filters.

Clean air inlets for the ventilation system. On curtain-sided barns, make sure the curtain is in good repair and fits tight against the building.

Winterize your buildings now before real winter weather arrives.

Feather Prof's Footnote: "Energy and persistence will conquer all things."



Background Scripture:

Matthew 3

Devotional Reading:

Isaiah 40: 3-11

A friend of mine turned away from orthodox Christianity years ago because the church in which she was raised harped too much on sin and depravity. "Are all human beings as miserable wretches as my preacher pro claimed Sunday after Sunday?" she asked me.

The person who raised this issue, I need to add, is a very fine and loving person with high moral standards and compassion for others. I sympathize with her reaction for too often the gospel is presented in a very one-sided manner. The church I attended as a child was always so overpoweringly somber, all too aware of the tragedy of sin and the need for repentance.

Later, however, I came to realize that the gospel must always be balanced between sin and redemption. These two polarities must always be kept in perspective. To speak only of sin is to deny the good news of the gospel. To speak only of redemption is to fail to understand the need for the gospel.

WHAT MAKES IT "GOOD"?

But we must never forget that what makes the "news" good news is the assurance that the love of God is more powerful and pervasive than the rebelliousness of His children. The mood of the gospel is one of hope and joy. I regret that my friend and so many others haven't heard the gospel in all its fullness. While I agree with my friend that we must not get hung up on sin, neither should we neglect the reality or complexity of sin. In my first pastorate I took communion to a shut-in who had been confined to her house for many years. Whenever I prayed the prayer of general confession, she would always interrupt, saying, "There is no need for that; I

haven't done anything bad since you were here last; in my condition, what could I do?"

I was so intimidated that I failed to answer her question. Today I would probably say that sin is not always a matter of what we've done or not done. Often it is a matter of what we feel and think and are. Who is so righteous that in the presence of God he or she will not feel a sense of inadequacy, of missing the mark? I don't have to carry a perpetual load of guilt to know that I haven't lived up to the best that God has placed within me.

IN GOD'S IMAGE

At this particular moment, I can't think of anything I have lately done or haven't done that demands repentance. Nevertheless, in God's presence I repent of self-centeredness, prejudice, self-deception, self-righteousness, pride, ignorance and more. So, in God's presence there is never a time when I do not need to seek a change of heart. At the same time I remember how wonderful it is to be God's child. Instead of thinking of myself as a piece of moral garbage—I heard one TV evangelist put it, I remember that I am created in His image, wonderfully endowed as are all His children with far more potential than I will likely fulfill. So the tragedy is not that I am a miserable wretch and act that way, but that I am God's creature and fail to live that way. Repentance frees me to return to what I was when God created me.

John the Baptist comes, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand" (3:2). And then he goes on to say, "Bear fruit that befits repentance" (3:8). Repentance that does not change our hearts is not repentance. I need mine changed daily, if you don't, more power to you.

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