



OPINION

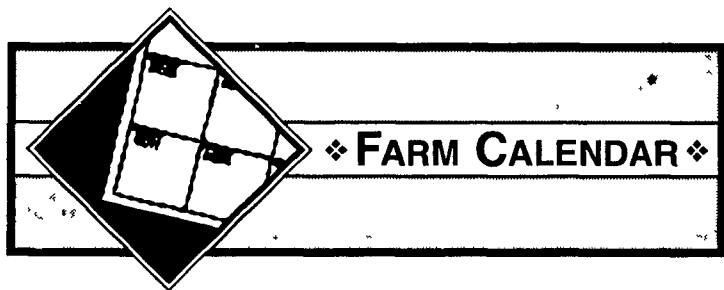
FFA A Vital Part Of Agriculture

This is FFA week (February 21-28). FFA enables students to achieve success through educational endeavors, community service and goal setting. One of the major positive aspects of an FFA education is the hands-on experience given students. FFA members, working through local agricultural education programs, are building career skills, developing leadership initiative, and gaining confidence to succeed in the future.

"Students realize the importance agricultural education programs can play in building the skills they need to succeed in the future," says Dr. Larry D. Case, national FFA advisor and coordinator of agricultural and rural education, U.S. Department of Education. "Our members are from very diverse backgrounds, yet they all realize FFA provides a strong foundation of knowledge and skills essential for success in life."

This year the national theme is "Building the Future." Right now, there is a move in Pennsylvania to begin planning the future of ag education. Certainly with the changing agricultural scene, ag education must move ahead with the times. We believe as FFA builds on the past and moves into the future with good intention to make ag education relevant in the next century, the FFA program will always be a necessary part of young people's education.

This FFA week again gives us an opportunity to congratulate all the FFA students and teachers who make the FFA program such a vital part of agriculture and agribusiness.



Saturday, February 21

Beaver/Lawrence Counties Holstein Association annual meeting, Bingo's Restaurant, New Castle, 7:15 p.m.

No-Till Seminar, Dauphin County Ag Center, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Sixth Annual Delmarva Pork Forum, UMES, Princess Anne, Md.

Wyoming County Sheep and Wool Producers Annual Lambing School, PDA Building, Tunkhannock, 9:30 a.m.-noon.

Beekkeeping Seminars, Beaver Co. Agricultural and Environmental Education Center, Beaver, PA, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Also Feb. 28, Lester Firth Learning Center, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Mid-Winter Lambing School, Dept. of Ag Building, Rte. 92 South, Tunkhannock, 9:30 a.m.-Noon.

Sheep Housing and Facilities Open House, Robert & Nancy Leed farm, Myerstown, 12-4 p.m.

Sunday, February 22

Monday, February 23

Grazing Short Course, Prince George's County, Extension Office, Clinton, Mondays through March 23.

Elk/Cameron Crops Day, St. Mary's Country Club, St. Mary's, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Pesticide Update Meeting, Venango County Extension Office, Franklin, 7:30-9:30 p.m.

Lambing Time and Sheep Management, Montoursville Presbyterian Church, 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 24

Lancaster County Dairy Days, Farm and Home Center. Also March 3, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Erosion and Sedimentation Control Workshop, Holiday Inn,

Bethlehem, through Feb. 25. Franklin County Beekeepers Association meeting, Franklin County Extension Office, 7:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m.

Winter Vegetable Meeting, Schuylkill Ag Center, Pottsville, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Beef Producers Meeting, Augusta House Restaurant, Sunbury, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.

Pesticide Update, Keystone High School, Knox, PA, 7:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m.

Dairy Steer 4-H Projects, Cecil County Extension Office.

beef Producers' Winter Meeting, Chester County Cooperative Extension, Government Services Center.

Herb Workshop, Cooking and Medicating, Penn State Cooperative Extension, Smedley Park, 1-3 p.m. and 7-9 p.m.

Tri-State Conservation Tillage Conference, Radisson Hotel, West Middlesex, 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Estate Planning, Best Western, Carlisle, 7 p.m.-10 p.m.

Pesticide Test, Extension Office, Somerset, 9 a.m.-Noon.

Wednesday, February 25

Pa. Holstein State Convention, Four Points Sheraton, Greensburg, through Feb. 27.

Family Heritage Restaurant, Vegetable Growers' Meeting, Franconia.

Lebanon County Dairy Day, Myerstown Church of the Brethren, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Organic Day and Crops Workshop, Carriage Corners Restaurant, Mifflinburg, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Landscape/Garden Center, Shadowbrook Resort, Wyoming County, 9 a.m.-9:30 p.m.

Industry Only Dairy Consultant



Now Is The Time

By John Schwartz

Lancaster County Agricultural Agent

To Manage Alfalfa Stands

Persistence is important to alfalfa growers. The longer a field is productive, the less it costs to grow alfalfa, according to Robert Anderson, Lancaster County Extension Agronomy Agent. Many things affect the longevity of a stand including variety, weather conditions, soil fertility, harvest management and pests. Some variables affecting the alfalfa plant, the farmer cannot control.

However, to help stands last as long as possible, farmers must control those variables which affect the stand within in their control. These include controlling weed and insect pests, selecting the right varieties, maintaining proper fertility and cutting at the correct harvest intervals. The Penn State Agronomy Guide gives recommendations on how to manage these variables. The Agronomy Guide is available at your county Penn State Cooperative Extension office.

To Look At Feeds

Glenn Shirk, Lancaster County Extension Dairy Agent, reminds us that dairy farmers are in the feed conversion business. Their goal is to add value to home grown and purchased feed by feeding it to cattle and converting it to milk. To accomplish this successfully, they need to have the right kind and quality of feeds and feeds that are digestible and affordable. Farmers need genetically superior cattle that are healthy and capable of digesting large quantities of feed and absorbing nutrients efficiently.

These are the pieces to the puzzle of efficient milk production. Some tests that help farmers monitor how well rations are balanced and feed nutrients are being utilized are milk urea nitrogen (MUN), milk fat and milk protein tests

To Attend Winter Meetings

A lot of new technology is

Workshop, Bradford County. Also Feb. 27.

Thursday, February 26

No-till Conference, Radisson Hotel of Sharon, West Middlesex, 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Sweet Corn School, Berks County Ag Center, 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. NY Farm Show, NYS Fairgrounds, Syracuse, NY, through Feb. 28.

Annual Meeting of the Pa. Holstein Association, Four Points Sheraton, Greensburg, 8:30 a.m.

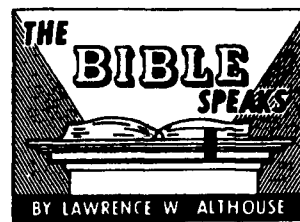
York Garden and Flower Show, York Fairgrounds.

Cecil County Agricultural Update (Agronomy and Dairy Days),

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being introduced to agriculture. These include precision agriculture, genetic engineering, bioengineering, computerization of equipment and new processing techniques. These technologies have introduced the development of Bt and brown midrib corn hybrids and new integrated pest management strategies. Kernel and stalk processing techniques like rolling affect digestibility and the manor in which rations have to be reformulated to utilize these feeds and technology efficiently.

This makes the winter meeting



PERVERTING GOD'S GRACE

February 22, 1998

Background Scripture:

Jude 3-4, 17-25

Devotional Reading:

Isaiah 55:6-13

A few months ago, my wife, Valere, and I led a tour to Turkey, following in the footsteps of the Apostles Paul and John. In preparation, I did some research on the history of the Byzantine Empire and its capital. Constantinople, today's Istanbul. For more than 1,000 years Constantinople was the capital not only of the empire, but also Eastern Orthodox Christianity. It was here that Christianity first became a legal religion. One of the greatest Christian churches, Hagia Sophia, also known as St. Sophia, was built as the mother church for Orthodox Christianity.

I was shocked to find that when Constantinople first fell to a foreign army in 1202, it was not to the Islamics, as I had assumed, but an army of Christian Crusaders. The Fourth Crusade was organized with the goal of recapturing the Holy Land and invading Egypt, but once launched, the Crusaders from Western Europe decided that Christian Constantinople was a far more lucrative prize — which, unfortunately, is what the crusades were mostly about.

Worst of all, I discovered that their sack of Constantinople is virtually without parallel. The Crusaders stormed into St. Sophia, looting, pillaging and seriously damaging it. Seizing the sacred vessels, they pried the valuable stones from them and used the vessels in their drunken orgy. They even forced a prostitute to dance lewdly before the altar. They so weakened the city that two centuries later it was unable to withstand the forces of the Islamic Ottoman Empire. History records that the Ottomans were much less rapacious than the Christian armies of Crusaders.

BELYING OUR FAITH

So, what does all of that have to do with the Epistle of Jude and the perversion of God's grace? Answer: it is simply a historic illustration that professing Christians have often grossly perverted the grace of God, giving themselves over to a licentiousness which belied their Christian profession. It can lead us to examine ourselves and our society to determine how the grace of God might still be perverted by people who claim to follow Christ.

Jude, the writer of this oft-for-

season very important. Come and learn about these new technologies and begin thinking which ones you need to adapt to your farming operations. On top of these technologies, farmers also need to learn about the changing economic and business environment they are working in. Do not forget you have 6 weeks to obtain your pesticide credits if your license expires on March 31, 1998.

Feather Prof's Footnote: "Ability may get you to the top, but it takes character to keep you there."

gotten New Testament letter, penned to warn Christians against "false teachers" whose blatant immorality was leading many astray and corrupting some churches. In their midst, he is saying there are "ungodly persons who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ (v. 4b).

What did he mean by "pervert the grace of our God?" We do not know exactly who there "ungodly persons" were. We do know that during this period there were some who believed that Jesus was not really human, but just appeared to be. If Jesus was not really human, it was assumed that he had little to do with the earthly lives that we lead. Therefore, you could believe in Christ but still live as if he has little or no significance for the way that we live on earth. So these people could claim Christ for their spirits without involving him in their minds and bodies.

DEPRAVED LIVES

They thus claimed allegiance to Christ, but lived depraved lives in sexual, drunken and violent debauchery — a virtual rejection of the Good News of Jesus Christ. We do not know if the "ungodly persons" consciously and vocally denied Christ, but, even if not, the lives they led denied the true meaning of our Lord.

I suspect that the "ungodly persons" did not recognize themselves in Jude's letter. They probably considered themselves "good Christians," strong supporters of the church and perfectly in step with the morals of the times — just as the Crusaders would centuries later. Despite the depredations they committed, they were greatly admired by Western society and honored by the churches. These people whose lives denied what they professed concerning Christ were more harmful to the gospel than those who openly and publicly denied Christ.

The late theologian Emil Brunner, has written: *The scandal of Christianity exists as a scandal only so long as we are full of ourselves. To believe in the cross of Christ is no scandal for those who have seen how perverted is their own wisdom . . . It is the very corrective for this perversion of our sight, it makes us look straight again, who by sin have become cross-eyed. Nothing is more insidious, nothing perverts more the grace of God than when talking Christianity becomes a substitute for living it.*

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