



OPINION

Nuisance Lawsuits Addressed

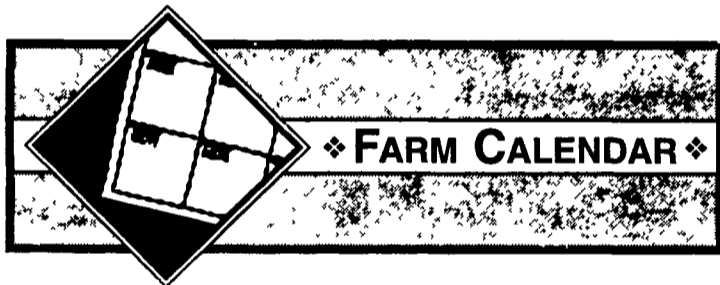
The Pennsylvania House and Senate are working toward agreement on legislation to provide farmers with new protections against nuisance lawsuits. The Senate bill that would amend the state's right to farm law was sponsored by Sen. Noah Wenger (R-Lancaster).

The right to farm law ensures that a homeowner living near a farm cannot sue the farmer for causing noise related to the farming operation. Wenger's bill would extend similar protections to farmers who alter their farming practices to comply with the state's nutrient management law. This new statute requires farmers with livestock-intensive operations to establish plans for the use and disposal of nutrient-rich substances, such as soil inputs and animal waste.

All of us in agriculture know that a right to farm law is needed because many non-farmers move from urban or suburban areas to the country and are unprepared for the impact a nearby farming operation can have on their own property. As a result, they may file lawsuits that can interfere with the farming operation.

We believe the best way to limit nuisance lawsuits in this situation is for farmers to go out of their way to communicate with their urban neighbors about the needs of the farming operation and try to conduct the farming operation within a good-neighbor frame of reference. However, this does not always settle neighbor problems.

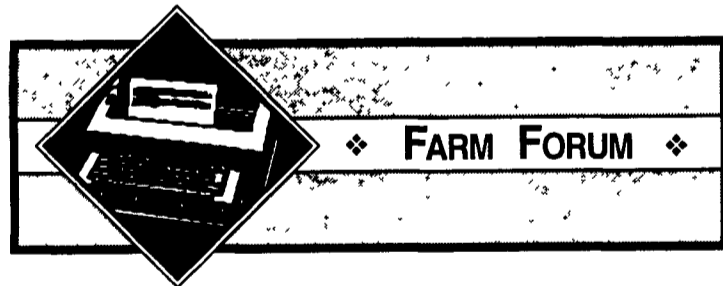
Therefore, we need the right to farm law to protect farmers while they go about their daily business of earning a living. And in this case, the new legislation also serves as an incentive for farmers to use good management practices by giving protection from nuisance suits to farms that update their operations.



❖ FARM CALENDAR ❖

- Saturday, May 9**
Capitol Area Beekeepers Association Short Course, Dauphin County Agricultural and Natural Resources Center, Dauphin, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. and May 16, Milton Hershey School Farm Conference Center and Apiary, Hershey, 1 p.m.-4:30 p.m.
- 24th Annual Western Pa. Sheep and Club Lamb Sale, Mercer County 4-H Park, Mercer, 6 p.m.
- Eastern Shore Spring 4-H/FFA Show, Centerville, Md.
- Managing Your Small Pond Workshop, Dave and Elaine Brown's Farm, Lemon, 9 a.m.-noon.
- Colonial Charolais World Class Sale, Leroy Myers Farm, Clear Spring, Md., futurity show 10 a.m., sale 1 p.m.
- Berks County Dairy Princess Pageant, Berks County Ag Center.
- Sunday, May 10**
Happy Mother's Day!
- Monday, May 11**
Pa. Rural Health Conference, Nittany Lion Inn, State College, thru May 13.
- Lehigh Valley Horse Council meeting, Bit-By-bit Farm, Wind Gap, 7:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, May 12**
Southeast Pa. Twilight Fruit Growers Meeting, Hausman's Fruit Farm, Limeport, 6:30 p.m.
- Thursday, May 14**
Woodland Management Workshop, York Extension Office, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.
- Twin Valley FFA Banquet, Sunny Crest Smorgasbord, 6:30 p.m.

- Saturday, May 16**
Bedford County Dairy Princess Pageant, Denny's Restaurant, Bedford, 7:30 p.m.
- Sunday, May 17**
5th Annual Manor FFA Benefit Horse Show, Columbia Riding Club, Columbia.



❖ FARM FORUM ❖

Editor:
"Ladies and gentlemen, your 1997-98 Berks County Dairy Princess, Erica Davis!" Ever since I was in first grade I have dreamed of being a dairy princess and wearing a crown on my head. This past year has been a once in a lifetime, dream come true. When I was crowned last May, I promised myself I would try to make as many appearances as I could, for I had only one year to represent the industry I love. I also knew that I would have to surrender my personal schedule for those various opportunities that awaited me. I would not give this past year up for the world. I had to learn time management to attend a promotion and still get my college homework finished. I think of all the memories I made, friendships I gained, and the poise and public speaker skills I acquired.

I remember going to a farm women group and playing a game with my uncle who only came because my aunt made him (we had fun). I recall the look of awe as a small child would point to my crown and ask, "Are those real diamonds?" I will always be thankful for the support I received this past year from my family and friends. I knew I could go to them for advice. This past year has been memorable and as I present the title of Berks County Dairy Princess to another deserving young lady on Saturday I will remind myself that this is not the end but only the beginning. I had my year to bask in the thrill of meeting dignitaries, having my picture in the paper, and receiving the starry-eyed stares from children. On Saturday these opportunities will be for
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Now Is The Time

By John Schwartz
Lancaster County Agricultural Agent

To Think Hay Quality

Hay crop forage (hay, haylage, pasture, etc.) is a major component of the dairy ration, according to Glenn Shirk, Lancaster County Extension Dairy Agent. With the first cutting of the season rapidly approaching, now is the time to think about hay quality and seasonal yield.

Consider the total ration for the dairy herd and the quality of hay needed for balancing the ration. Also, consider the quality of hay likely to be harvested the remainder of the season. These factors help to determine the optimum time to harvest the first cutting of hay.

To Plan First Cutting of Alfalfa

Glenn Shirk, Lancaster County Extension Dairy Agent, reminds us if you need longer length, high quality fiber, you may want to let the first cutting of alfalfa reach early bloom maturity before cutting. As the first cutting advances in maturity, protein levels and energy values will start declining, but the quality of the fiber will remain high and fiber yield will also increase.

Later cuttings may be cut at a younger stage of maturity for improved quality. The fiber from the first cutting is generally less lignified and more digestible than that produced during the hotter seasons of the year.

If you need high quality (low fiber, higher protein, higher energy) hay or haylage, the first cut-

ting may be harvested in the bud stage. This may mean halting corn planting temporarily. The early harvest may enable you to get an extra cutting per year. While the second cutting is growing, you may finish corn planting.

To Report New Hires

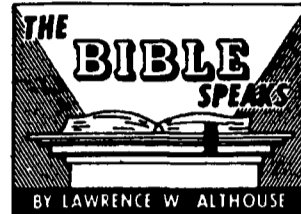
As of January 1, 1998, all Pennsylvania employers, including farmers and agricultural employers, are required to comply with the state's New Hire Reporting Program.

In order to comply with the program, employers must report to the Commonwealth certain information regarding every newly hired or rehired employee. The information will be used to maintain a registry of all employed persons within Pennsylvania to facilitate child support enforcement.

Information regarding the program was sent by the Commonwealth to over 250,000 employers prior to the Act taking effect. However, because farmers are exempt from many taxes and reports, most agricultural employers probably did not receive this information.

Any agricultural employer or farmer who did not receive an information packet, should request one by contacting the New Hire Program at 1-888-724-4737. The packet will provide a detailed explanation of what an employer must do in order to comply with the program. Penalties for violation of the program requirements range from a written warning to \$500.

Feather Prof's Footnote: "Cooperation is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results."



TRADITION!!! May 10, 1998

Background Scripture:
Mark 7:1-23
Devotional Reading:
Ephesians 6:10-20

Do you remember that moment in *The Fiddler on the Roof* where Tevye sings his poignant song lamenting the gradual dissolution of his people's traditions. Thrusting his arm upward, he proudly proclaims "Tradition!!!" But as the story progresses, he watches as one tradition after another is superseded by the march of time.

Christians today are often in the same place. We struggle, often vainly, to maintain traditions. One of the big debates in Christianity at this time is whether the traditional services of worship will survive the electronic age.

If we as Christians are challenged and troubled by the threats to our traditions, we can perhaps understand how the Jews of Jesus' day reacted to him. In the four gospels Jesus often appears as the destroyer of tradition. "And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with hands defiled?'" (Mark 7:5).

Actually, they were wrong about Jesus. He was not against tradition as such and, in fact, he kept most of the traditions in which he had been raised. Jesus recognized the value of traditions that linked them with their heritage and gave them a sense of identification as the people of God. In his teachings he often upheld those traditions: performing a healing he tells the healed to "go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to the people" (Luke 5:14).

LIPS, NOT HEARTS

When Jesus is challenged by the Pharisees and scribes on breaking the traditions, he indicates that the real problem is with them: "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.' You leave the commandment of God and hold fast the tradition of men" (7:6-8). Tradition can be harmful when

it is misused for hypocritical purposes. They can be used as a means of honoring God with our lips, but not our hearts. The beauty of tradition is that it gives us a system, a framework within which to practice our religion. The tragedy of tradition is also that same system and framework when we forget that traditions are usually the creations of human minds. Even though those minds may be divinely inspired, we must not mistake that their shape is something we give to them. As Paul put it, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels" (II Co. 4:7). To mistake the earthen vessels for the treasure has been one of our most prevalent tragedies.

JUDGING OTHERS

The Pharisees and scribes attack Jesus, asking, "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition . . . but eat with hands defiled?" (7:6). There was nothing wrong with the tradition of ceremonial handwashing before a meal. They did not know it at the time, but we know that it has considerable hygienic value. The problem was not in the handwashing, but in the use of it to judge other people. That is not an ancient concern, for we do very much the same thing today, rejecting other Christians because they do not keep the same conditions that we do.

Another objection of Jesus to traditions as practiced by the Pharisees and scribes: their man-made traditions often became a substitute for the commandment of God: "You leave the commandment of God and hold fast the tradition of men" (7:8). It is comparatively easier to live by a hundred religious traditions — good or bad — than adhere to the simple commandment of Jesus to "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your mind . . . (and) your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39).

Jesus said to the Pharisees and scribes words that I think he speaks to us today: "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God, in order to keep your tradition!" (7:9). Does the shoe fit?

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