



OPINION



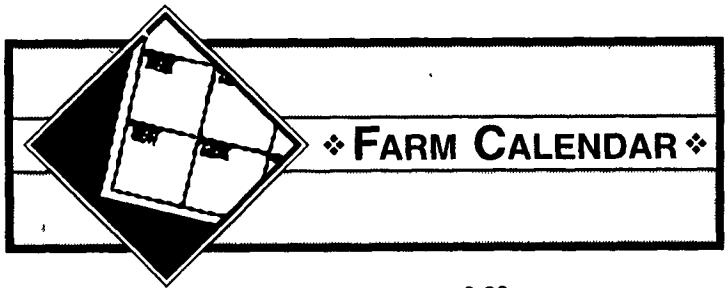
THE FFA THEME — MAKING THE CONNECTION

The future is only a tomorrow away, and we need leaders to meet the challenges rapidly transforming our world. Grown from the strong roots of American agriculture, an organization is preparing today's students with the knowledge and skills to provide this leadership. These are the young men and women of the FFA.

In schools across the nation, agricultural education and the FFA are connecting students to their communities. Their contributions are valued by government and businesses that recognize the importance of investing well. By working with community leaders, members embrace their civic duty and become active citizens.

Becoming a leader takes strong personal commitment. Members make the connection between education, hard work and a strong entrepreneurial spirit. FFA programs and activities reveal that education is more than homework and classes, and include competitive events that provide recognition for members who want to test their talents and strengthen their skills.

America leads the world in agricultural production and technology. The global market is full of opportunity. FFA connects members to the limitless possibilities by equipping them with a larger understanding of the world around them. FFA has made a commitment to provide a stepping stone to the diverse and exciting careers awaiting our members. The spirit of "the blue and gold" reaches out in all directions. FFA members stretch across the nation from the smallest of towns to the largest of cities, yet they are still connected. Through agricultural education and FFA, all are developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success. They are truly "Making the Connection."



Saturday, February 20
Lancaster County 4-H Benefit Auction, Farm and Home Center.

Dauphin County 4-H Banquet, Dauphin County Ag and Natural Resources Center, Dauphin. Western Pa. Gardening and Landscaping Symposium, Pittsburgh Civic Garden Center. Crop Management School, Thompson's Dairy Bar, Clarks Summit.

Beginning Beekeeper Seminar, Leslie Firth Learning Center, Mercer, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Careers In Ag Night, York County 4-H Center, 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

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

Beekeeping Short Course, S&S Apiaries, Little Creek, Del., also April 17.

Sunday, February 21
SRM/AFGC Meeting, Omaha, Neb., thru Feb. 26.

Game Bird Production and Management of Hunting Preserves, Nittany Lion Inn and Penn State Poultry Science, thru Feb. 23.

Monday, February 22
Franklin County Beekeepers Winter Meeting, Franklin County extension office, 7:30

p.m.-9:30 p.m.
USDA's 75th Ag Outlook Forum, Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel, Arlington, Va., thru Feb. 23.

Pesticide Applicator Recertification Meeting, Southern Fulton High School, Warfordsburg, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.

Pork Workshop, Farm and Home Center, 7 p.m.

Tuesday, February 23
Tri-State Conservation Tillage Conference, Radisson Hotel, West Middlesex.

Solanco Young Farmers meeting, Global Positioning, Solanco High School, 7:30 p.m.

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

Feeder School, Green Hill Sewing Club, Harrisonville, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Bucks County Conservation and pesticide update meetings, Neshaminy Manor Center, Doylestown, also March 2.

Beef Producers Meeting, Otterbein United Methodist Church, Sunbury, 7 p.m.-8:45 p.m.

Public Hearing by House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee on Northeast Dairy Compact, Room 60, East Wing of the Capitol, 10 a.m.

Wednesday, February 24
Mid-Atlantic Dairy Management Conference, Radisson Penn

Now Is The Time
By John Schwartz
Lancaster County Agricultural Agent

To Think Safety

Farming has the undesirable distinction of being the most hazardous occupation in the United States, reports Leon Ressler, Lancaster County Extension Agricultural Environment Agent. Now is a good time to review your equipment and regular routines to spot safety lapses.

Do not wait until tragedy strikes! Take the time now to replace any missing guards on PTO shafts or covers on augers. Check all fire extinguishers on the farm to make sure they are in working order. If you do not have any, purchase several for important locations on the farm.

Remove any piles of flammable trash that may have accumulated. Make sure all crop protection chemicals are stored away from food and feed and kept under lock and key at all times. Any hazardous sanitizing products should be stored out of reach of children.

To Make Tractors Safe

Harris, Camp Hill, thru Feb. 25. Pa. Potato Growers Cooperative Annual Meeting, Nittany Lion Inn, Penn State University Park, thru Feb. 25.

Vegetable growers meeting, Meyers Family Restaurant, Quakertown, 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Huntingdon County Dairy Day, Alexandria Fire Hall, Alexandria, 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Thursday, February 25

Pa. Ag In the 21st Century 1999 Conference, Holiday Inn Harrisburg East, Harrisburg, thru Feb. 26.

Sheep Production, Wesley Grange, Barkleyville, 7 p.m.

Kutztown Produce Auction Annual Growers Meeting, Fleetwood Grange, 10:30 a.m.-3:45 p.m.

N.Y. Farm Show, N.Y. State Fairgrounds, Syracuse, N.Y., thru Feb. 27.

Corn Roundtable Discussion, Hilltop Restaurant, Shade Gap, 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

York County Beekeepers Meeting, York extension office, 7 p.m.

Commercial Tree Fruit Growers Meeting, Carriage Corner Restaurant, Route 45, east side of Mifflinburg, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Friday, February 26

Bucks County extension annual banquet, St. Matthews Lutheran Church, 6:30 p.m.

Governor's Conference on Delaware Ag, Sheraton Inn, Dover, Del.

2nd Annual Northwest Grazing Conference, Clarion Holiday Inn, 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Feeder School, Jim Rider Farm, Gatesburg, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Saturday, February 27

Woodlot Owners Workshop,

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Rollovers and runovers account for a majority of fatalities on farms each year, according to Leon Ressler, Lancaster County Extension Agricultural Environment Agent. With this in mind, now is a good time to install ROPS devices on any tractors lacking them.

When operating a tractor make sure you always wear the seat belt. Also, decide now to adopt a firm policy of no riders on any tractor at any time. Check to make sure your lights are working on all tractors. Make sure all implements and tractors have an orange triangular slow moving vehicle sign easily seen by anyone overtaking the equipment.

To Protect Your Hearing

Power equipment may be responsible for reducing the hearing of many farmers and their family members. Agricultural workers are definitely at risk, many at high risk for noise exposure, according to Dr. Chris Eicher, Ohio State

Agricultural Engineer. He believes that ear plugs should be part of the dress of every person operating equipment.

Normal speech is in the range of 50 to 60 decibels. The threshold for pain is 140 decibels. Most farm tractors without a soundproof cab emit noise at 100 to 110 decibels. Soundproof cabs reduce the level to 85 to 90 decibels. O.S.H.A. recommendations limit exposure to 90 decibels for an eight hour work day.

Hearing loss is related not only to the decibel level of the sound but also to the pitch and length of time a person is exposed to it. Farmers should wear hearing protection at all times when operating equipment because there will be times the noise level will exceed what is safe for the ear to hear.

Feather Prof.'s Footnote
"Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you fail to focus on your goals."

the human race. So, even more important than the God who creates this unimaginable universe is the God who loves his creatures so much that he becomes incarnate in the man Jesus to effect our reconciliation with him.

Somewhere I read that philosopher Henry Thoreau was once asked by his mother whether he had made his peace with God and he replied, "Made my peace? I didn't know we were at war!" It is an amusing answer but it glibly glosses over a persistent fact: all of us at times, maybe all the time, in some way or ways, whether we are aware or not, are "at war" with God. No matter how close we may feel in our relationship with God, we all violate or adulterate that relationship from time to time. Even the best of his children must disappoint the Father.

UNLESS, GOD...

So reconciliation with God is our greatest need, but it's too big a job for us to be able to achieve it — unless God takes the initiative. And that is what Paul is saying: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." There is no better nor briefer statement of the gospel in a nutshell than that.

Neither is there a more concise and yet comprehensive statement of the gospel's meaning for each of us personally: "So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us" (5:20). If we are to be reconciled with God we must in turn take up his ministry of reconciliation. We don't have to preach sermons, teach lessons or stand on street corners to make public witness. Actually, we don't have to say much of anything so long as we let God be in us reconciling others to himself and to each other.

Wherever we are or go in the world we can be ambassadors for Christ, working for reconciliation in a broken, divided world. We do not have to bring nations together or personally reconcile the races and ethnic groups. But we can help people to be reconciled through the love of God in Christ that shines through us.

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