



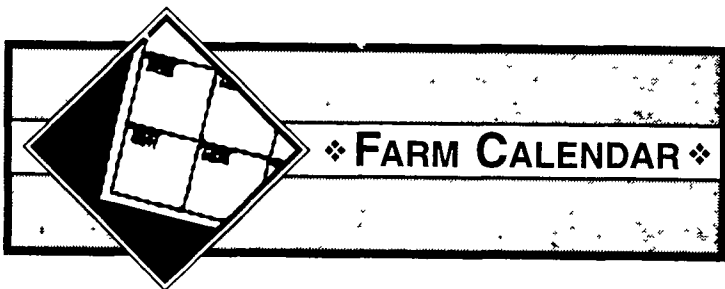
OPINION

Worse Than The Depression

When the price of hogs recently fell to below 10 cents a pound and the price in the supper markets did not fall at all, farmers had a reason to ask why. They had even more reason to ask why, when these low hog prices were compared to the three cents per pound hogs were bringing during the depression. Actually when you figure inflation and other factors, the depression prices would have been equivalent to approximately 26 cents per pound in today's economy. It's not hard to figure that hog farmers today are worse off than in the infamous depression so widely talked about in farming circles.

One of the things we have learned is that what the consumer pays in the supermarket is reflected in the live market only when supermarket prices are low. Demand and high prices in the supermarket do not mean automatic good prices for producers. This is the fallacy of the checkoff program many of us failed to see a decade ago. If the checkoff program did create the demand that kept the consumer buying pork at strong prices the value received at packer and supermarket levels did not get passed down to the producer who pays the checkoff. Without the ability to insure that profits created by any of the checkoff programs, which totals \$659 million per year reach the producers, they are paying to put themselves out of business.

One of the major forces that keep producers in slavery is the lack of price discovery on animals when they are alive and on food. Most farmers don't know what they will be paid until after the animal is on its way through the packing system. There isn't much room for a farmer to negotiate a price at this stage of the game.



FARM CALENDAR

Saturday, March 27

- Pa. Beef Expo, State College, thru March 29.
- Bucks/Montgomery County Wool Pool Annual Banquet, Montgomery County 4-H Center, Creamery.
- Dauphin County Farm Bureau Spring Banquet Meeting, Halifax Ambulance and Rescue Building, Halifax, 7 p.m.
- Pa. Horse Farms Open House, variety of county locations.
- Maryland Brown Swiss Breeders Association Annual Meeting, Dan Dee Family Restaurant, Frederick, Md., 7 p.m.
- DairyLea Regional Tour Meeting, Holiday Inn, Middletown, N.Y., 1 p.m.
- Pa. Sheep and Wool Growers Association Annual Membership Meeting, Grange in Center Hall, 10 a.m.
- Pa. Brown Swiss Association Spring Meeting, Harrisburg Hilton Hotel, Harrisburg, 11 a.m.

Sunday, March 28 Palm Sunday

Monday, March 29

- LCI Annual Meeting and Conference On Animal Health, Nashville, Tenn., thru April 1.
- Keystone Farm Credit Stockholders Meeting, Holiday Inn Conference Center, Fogelsville, 7 p.m.
- Scouting Clinic, Logan Grange Hall, Pleasant Gap, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Tuesday, March 30

- Regional Computer Training, Lancaster Farm and Home Center, 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., also April 1.

- Internet Workshop For Beef Producers, York extension office, 7 p.m.-9:30 p.m.
- 3d Party Certification and Chain-Of-Custody Workshop, Days Inn, Reading, 6:30 p.m.
- Keystone Farm Credit Stockholders Meeting, Yoder's Restaurant, New Holland, 7 p.m.
- York County Holstein and Beshore Farms Barn Meeting, Dale and Fred Rice, Ricecrest Farms, Chambersburg, noon.
- Berks County Farm Bureau Farm Management Seminar, Leesport Livestock Market, Leesport, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Wayne County 4-H Tractor Club Farm Machinery Safety Certification Program, Wayne County extension office, Honesdale, 8 p.m., also April 6, 13, 20, and 27.

Wednesday, March 31

- The Pa. Food Industry: Strengthening Partnerships For Growth, Holiday Inn, Grantville, thru April 1.
- Conference On Revitalization And Growth of Northeast Dairy Farming, Marriott Hotel, Syracuse, N.Y., thru April 1.
- 3d Party Certification and Chain-Of-Custody Workshop, Holiday Inn, Dunmore Scranton-East, 6:30 p.m.
- Hay Producers Roundtable, Burns Hall, Carroll County Ag Center, Westminster, Md., 10 a.m.
- DairyLea Cooperative Conference On Revitalization and Growth of Northeast Dairy Farming, Syracuse Marriott, East Syracuse, N.Y., thru April 1.
- Lebanon County Conservation District Biosolids Meeting, Lebanon County Ag Center, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.



Now Is The Time

By John Schwartz

Lancaster County
Agricultural Agent

To Evaluate Alfalfa Fields

With warm weather arriving, now is a good time to walk your alfalfa fields to determine the number of live alfalfa plants you have in each field.

According to Robert Anderson, Lancaster County Extension Agronomy Agent, the number of healthy plants will have a big impact on this year's hay yields. To make this estimate, use a piece of wire (an old coat hanger works well) that is bent into a square which measures one foot on each side.

With this tool, the number of healthy plants in one square foot area may be determined by randomly selecting several sites in each field. Check the whole field not just the corners. Record the number of healthy plants per square foot. Then determine the average number of plants per square foot and look at how much your numbers vary from site to site within the field.

To Decide Future of Alfalfa Fields

How many alfalfa plants per square foot are needed to have a good chance of having a profitable yield? That number will vary, but guidelines commonly discussed are based on the age of the stand, reports Robert Anderson, Lancaster County Extension Agronomy Agent. In the first year after establishment, while alfalfa plants are relatively small, a larger number of plants are needed. A field several years old will have larger crowns or plants which will produce more stems per plant, therefore less plants are needed.

Some guidelines are: 20 or more plants per square foot in the seeding year, 12 to 20 plants per square foot in the second full year of production and 7 or more plants after that. This is based on healthy plants. To determine healthy plants you need to remove and check crowns for insect and disease damage. Another measure is stems per square foot. In established stands you should have 45 or more stems per square foot.

The best way to determine when to rotate an established alfalfa field is to look at yields over the past several years, the

Thursday, April 1

- Spring Dairy Expo '99, Ohio Expo Center, Columbus, Ohio.
- 3d Party Certification and Chain-Of-Custody Workshop, Penn State Campus, Harrisburg, 6:30 p.m.
- Milk Price Strategies Workshop, Schoonovers Restaurant, Middlebury Center, 1 p.m.-3 p.m.

Saturday, April 3

- Ju-Vindale Invitational and Spring

(Turn to Page A38)

number of plants per square foot and the number of stems per square foot at the beginning of each season.

To Bring the Beach to the Cows

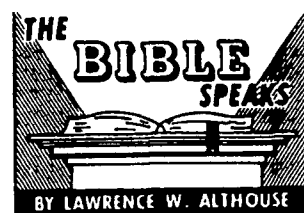
A soft, sandy, shaded beached can be a comfortable place to recline even for cows, reports Glenn Shirk, Lancaster County Extension Dairy Agent. Some farmers are bringing the sand to the cows and the cows like it! Bedding stalls with 6 to 8 inches of clean, dry sand provides cows with a clean, healthy and comfortable place to rest.

Clean sand supports less bacterial growth than organic forms of bedding and reduce the risk of disease. To keep the sand clean and dry, the stalls need to be well maintained. This requires

about 40 pounds of sand per stall per day. Coarse sand and gravel kicked out onto a concrete walkway, may become embedded in the sole of the hoof causing abscesses and lameness. Thus, the sand should be fine. Sand also complicates manure handling because it may settle out in manure pits.

Thus, provisions need to be made for separating it from manure or for scooping or dredging manure pits. Sand is also abrasive and may cause excessive wear on scraper blades, augers, bearings, etc. In spite of these challenges, many farmers say the benefits outweigh the problems.

Feather Prof's Footnote: "Champions are made by expecting more than others think is possible."



TALKING A GOOD GAME

March 28, 1999

Background Scripture:

John 4:1-42

Devotional Reading:

Revelation 7:13-17

Some of us would rather talk Christianity than do it. It's easier and doesn't cost anything. And most important of all, it can become a substitute for the doing of it.

Christ, however, makes us choose one or the other.

That's what he did to the Samaritan woman whom he encountered at the well of Jacob. The conversation began on a very elemental level. "Give me a drink." Jesus asked her. Simple as it was, the request unsettled her. He was a Jew and she a Samaritan. Jews avoided all contact with Samaritans, looking down upon them because of historical, racial and religious differences.

Actually, there was still another barrier between them: she was a woman. It was unseemly for any conversation between a man and a strange woman. "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" Furthermore, she was not only a woman, but marked locally as a woman of loose sexual morals. Presumably he did not know of her bad reputation.

Instead of answering her question, Jesus takes the initiative, saying that if she had known who he was, she would have been asking him for a drink. "Sir" she protested, "you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water?" One senses a bit of sarcasm: "Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us this well?" Once again, Jesus shocked her. "Every one who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst." Yes, he is greater than Jacob. Is it in contempt that she asks: "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw?"

Perhaps she thought she had put him in his place, until he said these fateful words: "Go, call your husband and come here." I'm sure there was a weakness in her voice as she said, "I have no husband." Did

she sense what was to be his next reply? "You are right in saying 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband."

At last the awful truth is out! Although he was a stranger and a Jew, he seemed to know all about her. That is scary!

So, when we are in the presence of someone who seems to know too much about us, we try to change the subject. Let's talk religion! "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place to worship." If she could get him going on this controversial subject, perhaps he would forget about her unsavory, but well-deserved reputation.

'I AM HE!'

But Jesus says the day is coming when true worship will not depend upon being on the right mountain. Unprepared for that answer and nervous about the direction in which it is leading, she says, "Well, when the Messiah comes, he will answer this question." We can almost feel the deadly silence in which his words are spoken: "I who speak to you am he!"

Just as the new wine of the gospel is superior to the purification of the old rites (as at the wedding at Ana), and the gospel's saving grace of God is superior to the legalism of the Pharisees (as in Nicodemus's visit by night), so the Father's "spirit and truth" will supersede all the distinctions and quarrels about the 'right way' to do religion.

When the disciples arrive with provisions, they tell him, "Rabbi, eat." But he startles them as he startled the woman, saying "I have food to eat of which you do not know." Misunderstanding him—as had the wedding guests at Cana, Nicodemus, and the woman at the well—they are confused until he tells them: "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work."

In Christian discipleship as in so much else, it is doing it, not talking a good game that is required of us.

Lancaster Farming

Established 1955

Published Every Saturday

Ephrata Review Building

1 E. Main St.

Ephrata, PA 17522

- by -

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