



OPINION

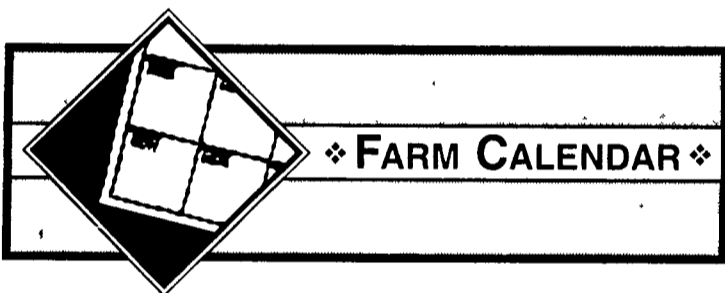
Earth Day, Give Credit Where Credit Is Due

All across America this week, the people are celebrating Earth Day with will climax in a national event on April 22-23 on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. This year, more than 50 partner organizations and agencies will participate. The celebration highlights innovative environmental practices and a public rededication to conserve and protect the approximately one billion acres of land used in the United States to produce food, natural fiber, and many other products.

The agricultural community has made great strides in the cleanup and protection of our streams, for example. As reported last week, EPA's own statistics show that 96 percent of the nation's rivers and streams are not impaired by agriculture.

From a recent national survey, it was reported that 99 percent of producers and ranchers are really concerned about the environment. As we approach this 1999 Ag-Earth Celebration, the agriculture community is rededicated to the growing partnerships between agriculture and the environment. We want to build on the environmental successes and innovative practices that have worked to conserve our natural resources and provide the world with an abundant, reliable and affordable supply of food, natural fiber, and other agriculture products.

We think agriculture should get more credit for successful efforts to save the environment. To often, agriculture is blamed for problems that really start in the city. Non-point pollution has become the buzzwords to blame agriculture. This finger-pointing comes in spite of the fact that half of the modern sewage treatment plants still flush half of the nitrogen and phosphate from human wastes into our streams. Earth Day is a good time to pay tribute to agriculture's environmental success story. It's a good time to give credit where credit is due.



Saturday, April 24

Pond Management For Irrigation, Livestock, and Recreational Uses, Hollidaysburg Church of the Brethren, Hollidaysburg, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

University of Delaware 25th Ag Day Celebration, Newark, Del., 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Eastern Llama and Alpaca Festival, Lebanon Expo Center, Lebanon, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., also April 25.

20th Annual Blue Halter Calf Sale, Bedford County Fairgrounds, 1 p.m.

Working Sheepdog Trial, Springton Manor Farm, Glenmoore, thru April 25.

Wayne County Calf Sale, Fairgrounds, Honesdale, noon.

Sunday, April 25

Carroll County Truck and Tractor Pull, Carroll County Ag Center, Westminster, Md.

Monday, April 26

Tuesday, April 27

Shearing School, Hidden Meadow Farm, Souderton, thru April 28.

Pond Management Satellite Clinic, downlinked across the state, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.

Sheep Shearing School, Dave Whiting Farm, Pulaski, thru April 28.

Water Testing, Tulpehocken High School, 7:30 p.m.

Northwest Pa. Woodland Association meeting, Spartansburg Elementary School, Spartansburg, 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 28

Beef Producers Spring Meeting, Herr Angus Farm, Nottingham, 7 p.m.

Thursday, April 29

Lancaster County Graziers First Pasture Walk of 1999, Jeff B. Stoltzfus Farm, Kirkwood, 10 a.m.

Water Testing, Conrad Weiser High School, 7:30 p.m.

Tulpehocken Ag Department 3rd Grade Elementary Science Adventure, Mor-Dale Farms, Frystown, 9 a.m.

Friday, April 30

Basic Elements of Bulk Ingredients Workshop, Penn State Conference Center, University Park.

North Central Beef Production Training Workshop, Walker Township Building, Day 1, 7 p.m.-9 p.m., and Day 2, May 1, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

Penn State Poultry Science Club 9th Annual Poultry Science Club Awards Banquet, Ramada Inn, State College, dinner 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, May 1

Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival, Howard County Fairgrounds, West Friendship, Md., thru May 2.

State 4-H Forestry Day, Rockspring, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Creating Habitat Using Native Plants, Penn State Berks Campus, 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Sunday, May 2

Monday, May 3

19th Annual FARMER Banquet, Hotel Hershey, Hershey, reception 5:30 p.m., dinner 6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 4

Retail Farm Market School, Lehigh County Ag Center, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.



Now Is The Time

By John Schwartz

Lancaster County Agricultural Agent

To Look At Alternatives

According to Glenn Shirck, Lancaster County Extension Dairy Agent, there are many different ways to farm. How much capital you will need and what you will need it for will be determined in part by the style of farming you choose.

The dairy industry is changing. These changes may dictate a need for farmers to re-examine the way they do business. The traditional methods of the past may not be appropriate for the present or for the future. So, explore the options, push the pencil, consider the pros and cons of the various options and choose a style that fit you.

This is called business planning. The farms that will survive in the future will be the ones that have done adequate business planning. If you do not know how to develop a business plan, go to your local book store to buy a basic book on business planning and attend meetings on the subject. The business plan is your road map for the future.

To Do A Business Plan

A business plan helps you to determine your future. It is a systematic analysis of your business. Your business plan helps you to focus on the things you need to do in order to stay in business.

A good business plan looks at your industry, markets, competitors, the things you do best, financial information, preparing for change and thinking strategically.

To help Pennsylvania dairy farmers develop business plans, the Pennsylvania Dairy Stakeholders have developed a Business Planning Assistance Program (BPAP). BPAP grants up to \$1,500 will be made available to eligible producers. Participants must be existing or start up dairy farms in Pennsylvania and accepted into the program.

Grant moneys may be used only to cover the costs of having an independent third party provide the professional services.

Pasture Walk, Lowden Farm, Coal Center, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, May 5

Thursday, May 6

Sheep Shearing School, Pat and Chris O'Brien Farm, Amity, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., also May 7.

Friday, May 7

Saturday, May 8

N.Y. Hereford Breeders spring sale, cooperative extension, Morrisville, N.Y., 12:30 p.m.

necessary to assist the farmer evaluating the dairy farm business. Applicants are required to contribute at least 25 per cent of the total project costs.

Farmers interested in the BPAP should contact Alan Bair at 777 West Harrisburg Pike, Middletown PA 17057 or calling 717-948-6328.

Avoid Soil To Compaction

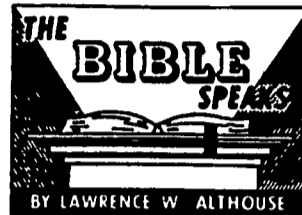
According to Dr. Doug Beegle, Penn State Extension Soil Scientist, when a soil is compacted by a heavy load, such as a manure spreader, the structure of the soil is destroyed.

The compaction decreases the amount of pore space in the soil. Adequate pore space is important for air, water and nutrient movement in the soil. It is also important for root growth. A 10 per cent reduction in pore space can result in a 4 times increase in root resistance.

This means the plant roots will not be able to penetrate the soil to receive water and nutrients needed for optimum growth. The major contributors to soil compaction are heavy loads, like manure spreaders, on wet soils. As manure storages become more popular, the period of time used to spread manure becomes shorter and equipment gets bigger.

The two most popular times of year to spread manure is fall and early spring. These are also times when the soils are most often wet. Compaction may be minimized in several ways. Avoid driving heavy loads on wet soils. Spread out the weight as much as possible with multiple axles and tires. Use radial tires. Do not overload when soils are wet.

Feather Prof.'s Footnote. "The harder you work, the harder it is to surrender." Vince Lombardi



FREE INDEED!
April 25, 1999

Background Scripture:

John 8:12-59

Devotional Reading:

Psalms 51:1-9

A little boy who passed his neighbor on the sidewalk. "I'm running away from home!" a little boy told his neighbor as he sped off down the block. Minutes later the neighbor saw him coming up from the opposite direction. As he passed the neighbor, he said again, "I'm running away from home!" Soon the boy was seen to be approaching again and this time the neighbor stopped him, "If you're running away from home, why do you continue to run around the block." Looking at the neighbor in disbelief, the boy explained, "Cause I'm not allowed to cross the street!"

I've learned over the years: no freedom is absolute and when we have reached what we think is freedom, we may have simply attained a state of bondage on a less obvious level. We are a lot like that little boy, forever running away from home, but getting nowhere because we aren't allowed to cross the street.

In John 8 we find the critics of Jesus confidently discussing "truth" and "freedom" without really knowing what it is like to personally know either of them. Like the old farmer once explained, "You can't describe a place you ain't never been to." So often, that is what is happening when we talk confidently about "truth" and "freedom."

WALKING IN DARKNESS

It all begins when Jesus proclaims, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (8:12). Immediately the Pharisees pounce on him, "You are bearing witness to yourself; your testimony is not true."

They contest what Jesus is saying because they reject him, but Jesus tells them that what he says is true because it comes, not from him, but God. Surely, if they knew God, they would recognize what Jesus is saying as true.

Of course, that's the hard part, isn't it? How can we be sure we know God: "If you knew me," says Jesus, "you would know my Father also" (8:19). This is what Jesus meant when he said the he is the light of the world. He illuminates

ates the darkness that surrounds the nature of God. When we know what Jesus is about, we also know what God is like. All that I think that I know about God is what I have seen in the life and words of Jesus, enough for me to live hopefully and faithfully.

This light gives me the only possible capacity for true freedom. As Jesus tells his followers: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (8:21,22). Their reply is indignant: "We are descendants of Abraham, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will be made free?'" (8:33).

WHO ME, IN BONDAGE?

I can hear us saying: "I'm a descendant of John Wesley, how can you say I'm in bondage?" "I'm a disciple of John Calvin, what do you mean I'm not free?" "I'm a Roman Catholic, how can you make me more free?" Actually, "truth" and "freedom" are not so much in what we say we believe, but in what we do about it. "If you were Abraham's children, you would do what Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth..." (8:39,40). If the life doesn't match the words, the words are a lie.

As I write these words the whole world waits to see whether we will once again go to war with Saddam Hussein. The other day my wife, Valere, told an audience that, as Christians, we ought to pray for Saddam and the people were shocked. Pray for such a man as he? But isn't that what Christ has taught us to do with our enemies? If we are true disciples of Jesus, how can we curse those who are our enemies? Is it because we believe that God is incapable of changing the heart of this tyrant?

"So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." Only in Christ can we know real freedom — from hate and prejudice, from judging when we ought to be blessing, from despair when God offers us hope. Only when Christ has freed us from that kind of bondage can we be free indeed!

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