



# OPINION

## Cropland Is Unique Ecosystem

Cropland is a unique, essential environmental ecosystem to the survival of modern man.

Modern man, in this case, is defined as agrarian-dependent. The world's truly nomadic cultures are gone. Hunting and gathering now has little reference to finding wild foods.

In fact, except for a dwindling percentage of wild seafoods steadily being replaced by coastal aquacultural "cropwaters," most humans around the world grow and harvest foods from soils we call cropland.

Even livestock in high-yield confined housing operations require a substantial amount of corresponding cropland to provide the feeds used to raise them for slaughter.

It isn't all done in greenhouses in growing media.

This is important to recognize because it is cropland, not "farmland" that comprises the real goal in preserving the open space being purchased through the state farmland preservation program.

(The Farmland Preservation Program is to get a \$43 million boost this year, thanks to the current state General Assembly, and this week to Gov. Ridge's pen.)

It is cropland that can be differentiated from noncropland because of its production capacity.

And despite the arrogance of some, men did not, and do not, manufacture cropland. At least not yet.

As far as we can tell, the creation of cropland required the power that formed the mountains, the oceans, the watercycles of world, and the atmosphere.

It is time to recognize in public policy that cropland is a limited natural resource that can be destroyed or nurtured. Those without control and access to cropland survive at the mercy of those who control it.

Yet, while we rightly attempt to prevent irreversible damage to watersheds through the protection of wetlands, we sit around and talk about lifestyles and pleasant views and keeping farms in a family when we discuss farmland preservation.

It's time to recognize cropland for what it is, and to take the message to the public — cropland is an essential element to an environment suitable for long-term sustained human existence.

❖ FARM CALENDAR ❖

- Saturday, June 26**  
 Dauphin County Holstein Association Twilight Meeting, Crisinger Dairy Farm, Gratz, 7 p.m.  
 First Annual Pa. Herb Festival, York Fairgrounds, York, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.  
 Crawford County Dairy Princess Pageant, John and Janelle Green, Springboro.  
 Somerset County Dairy Princess Pageant, Berlin Brothersvalley High School.  
 19th Annual Hickory Ridge Antique Farm Show, Horace Potter residence, Milford, Del., thru June 27.  
 York County Dairy Princess Pageant, York County 4-H Center, Bair, 7:30 p.m.  
 Greenhouse Growers Workshop, UMES, Princess Anne, Md., 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Sunday, June 27**  
 Pa. Council of Cooperatives Summer Youth Institute, Shippensburg University, thru June 30.  
 Ephrata Area Young Farmers picnic, Ephrata Park, 12:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m.
- Monday, June 28**  
 Pa. Junior Holstein Judging Schools, thru July 2.  
 Pa. Junior Holstein Judging School, Adams County hosts, thru June 29 (eastern school).
- Tuesday, June 29**  
 Twilight Christmas Tree meeting,

Jeffers Tree Farm, southeastern Susquehanna County, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.  
 Pa. Tobacco Marketing Association Banquet Meeting, Yoder's Restaurant, New Holland, 6:45 p.m.

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❖ FARM FORUM ❖

**Editor:**  
 Over the past year I have had the honor of serving as the 1998/99 Centre County Dairy Princess. Every since that night on June 12, 1998, I have been overwhelmed with the great opportunities and responsibilities that come with the title which are truly opportunities of a lifetime.  
 When I was crowned you probably wouldn't have known that I was the quietest and shyest young lady, but after having to appear in front of crowds of people I now have the ability to talk, speak, and listen to people of all ages and gender. One of

**Now Is The Time**  
 By John Schwartz  
 Lancaster County Agricultural Agent

### To Understand Bt Corn

The long-term effectiveness of controlling insects depends on the willingness of farmers to make sure some of the insects survive. This is especially true with some of the new technologies associated with genetic engineering, reports Robert Anderson, Lancaster County extension agronomy agent.

Entomologists warn that how long Bt corn hybrids will remain an effective way to control European corn borer (ECB) will depend on farmers' understanding and willingness to use Bt hybrids along with non-Bt refuge acres to reduce the potential of resistance development in the ECB population.

Bt technology was so effective at controlling the ECB, it is being adopted at an alarming rate. First introduced in 1996, it accounted for one percent of seed sales and grew to 19 percent of sales in 1998. As the percentage of the corn acreage planted to Bt increases, the potential for the insect to become resistant also increases.

### To Plant Non-Bt Refuge Areas

According to Dr. Kevin Stefey, University Of Illinois Extension entomologist, planting a non-Bt refuge is in everyone's best interest. Everybody loses if we lose the ability of transgenic crops to control pests.

If we blow this, we only have ourselves to blame. The use of refuge planting to manage insect resistance relies on the theory that if an European corn borer (ECB) does survive in Bt corn field, it will find a mate

the greatest lessons I have learned in the past year is that every person is different. They have all taught me something I didn't know before.

As the Centre County Dairy Princess I have some pretty amazing tasks. I made a giant sundae, rode in many parades and handed out many ribbons, but speaking to more than 100 Penn State Professors and local lawyers was difficult, especially after I informed them that I wanted to go to Delaware University instead of Penn State.

The countless questions and facts that I have heard and

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from a refuge area to mate with. If a resistant borer mate with a susceptible borer, the offspring would only carry a single resistance gene and may not survive on Bt corn the next year. Without the pool of susceptible borer to mate with, the resistant borers would mate with other resistant borers and continue to produce resistant offspring.

How much refuge is enough? Finding agreement on this question is difficult. One suggestion is 20 percent.

### To Know

#### Poisonous Plants

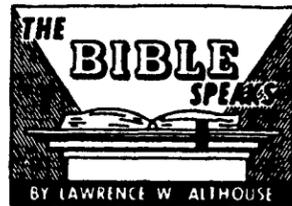
According to Chester Hughes, Lancaster County Extension livestock agent, Pennsylvania has about 100 toxic plants. Some of these plants are responsible for death of numer-

ous domestic livestock every year.

Factors contributing to plant poisoning are starvation, accidental eating, and browsing habits of animals. With houses springing up everywhere, the rural/urban interface is dramatically increasing and many farm neighbors are unfamiliar with the plants that are toxic to animals.

Following are some common plants that are poisonous to livestock and should not be tossed over the fence to grazing animals: Garden Iris, Holly, Morning Glory, Bracken Fern, Rhubarb, English Ivy, Wild Cherry, Yew, Oak and Mountain Laurel.

*Feather Prof.'s Footnote: "Commitment is the difference between wishing and doing."*



### RETURN TO FOLLY

June 27, 1999

#### Background Scripture:

Genesis 6:5 through 9:17

#### Devotional Reading:

Deuteronomy 7:7-11

When I read the scriptural passages for this week, I remembered the theme that Winston Churchill inscribed in *Triumph and Tragedy*, the final volume in his remarkable history of the Second World War:

*How the Great Democracies Triumphed and so Were Able to Resume the Follies Which Had So Nearly Cost Them Their Life*

For those of us who remember World War II and have witnessed what has taken place in the world in 43 years since its close, the words seem ominously prophetic. It does seem at time that we worked so hard, fought so tenaciously and sacrificed so much only to resume the follies which brought us to war in the first place.

#### FROM CRISIS TO CRISIS

This, of course, is hardly a surprise to those of us who read history. It is the story of the world from ancient time to the present: surviving one crisis and then planting the seeds of the next one. Each time, we think if we can only get through this one, we will never find ourselves in this situation again. But generation after generation lives from one crisis to another, usually of our own making.

While I don't believe the unchanging, unchangeable God of creation actually "was sorry that he had made man on the earth" (can God make mistakes?), I can understand why it is said "it grieved him to his heart" (6:6). The writer of Genesis here has a hopeless task in that he is trying to express in human emotions the mind of God. He is trying to illustrate the Great Flood as the consequence of the sin and folly of everyone—with the exception of Noah. The rest of humanity was depraved and they seemed to go from bad to worse. "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord." (6:8).

During World War II our

world seemed aptly described by the story of Noah: "For the earth is filled with violence" (6:13). But that is a fairly accurate description of the world at many times in its existence, including today. Corruption, depravity, licentiousness, cruelty, deceit and lying are all too prevalent in our society—at the bottom as well as at the top. Perhaps we need to ask ourselves about the consequences of the way we live today.

#### A DIFFERENT WORLD

I have been reading an interesting book entitled, *How the Irish Saved Civilization* by Thomas Cahill (Doubleday). It is a historian's account of how a small group of Irish monks took up the labor of copying all of Western literature they could find to preserve it in this most desperate time when the great Roman Empire collapsed under the weight of barbarian invasion bringing in the Dark Ages. Without this effort by the Irish monks, Cahill says "their world would have been an entirely different one—a world without books. And our own world would never have come to be.

In a sense, the Irish monks by the grace of God provided a Noah's ark to preserve civilization a time comparable to the Great Flood. There have been many times in the history of the world when this same phenomenon has prevailed. I do not think it chance, but Divine providence. Perhaps it is the continuing fulfillment of God's pledge to Noah: "This is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all generations: I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth" (9:12).

As we approach the year 2,000 there are many dire predictions of the end of the world. We need to look at the rainbow and remind ourselves of God's everlasting covenant. There will always be an awesome price for human folly, but God's redeeming love is even greater.

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