



# OPINION

## Silo Fire Danger

Dry weather in many parts of Pennsylvania may be causing an increased risk of tower silo fires from a lack of proper forage moisture content and/or from poor fermentation of silage, which in turn could lead to the production of greater amounts of volatile gases that can ignite a silo fire.

Dennis Murphy, professor of agricultural engineering and a farm safety expert in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, explains that the moisture content for forages stored in a silo should be between 45 and 65 percent. If the moisture content falls below the 45 percent level, fire risk increases. He adds that several gases, including hydrogen and methane, are by-products of fermenting silage.

"If excess gases are present, they could burst into flames if exposed to a source of ignition, such as static electricity or sparks created during the loading or blowing of silage," Murphy warns. "Other potential ignition sources are barn lights or other electrical equipment near or at the base of unloading chutes."

Murphy says farmers should take the following precautions to help reduce the risk of silo fires:

—Test the moisture of the forage being ensiled.

—Water down silo unloading chutes.

—Provide plenty of ventilation around the silo, especially at loading areas and up chutes. "Use a barn fan to keep extra oxygen moving up the silo chute," advises Murphy. "This helps prevent the generation of excess silo gases and dilutes the gases present, keeping them from reaching explosive concentrations."

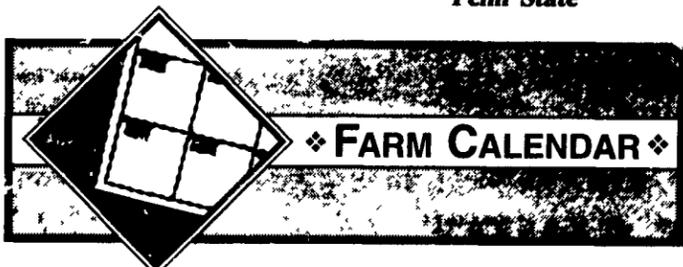
—Clean out chaff and other debris from the silo chute and from around the rungs or frame of chute doors.

Murphy says farmers also must remember that besides the potential fire hazard, silo gases are toxic, especially in the first 48 to 60 hours after filling. "If you must enter the silo within the first 48 to 60 hours, protect yourself by wearing a self-contained breathing apparatus," he warns. "If you don't have access to one, stay out of the silo."

"Dangerous levels of silo gas may be present for an additional two to three weeks," he adds. "To enter without a self-contained breathing apparatus during this period, ventilate with the silo blower. Open all doors, run the blower fan for 20 minutes and leave it running while you are in the silo. Enter only after you have put on a respirator for toxic dust, and have a second person with you to assist in an emergency."

Please be careful.

Ronald Hostettler  
Penn State



### FARM CALENDAR

**Saturday, September 4**  
 Pennsylvania Holstein Northeast Championship Show, Fairgrounds, Whiteville, 10 a.m.  
 Juniata County Fair, Port Royal, thru Sept. 11.  
 Mon Valley 4-H Dairy Show, Fayette County Fairgrounds.  
 Northwest 4-H Dairy Show, Crawford County Fairgrounds, Meadville.  
 Pioneer Labor Day, Old Bedford Village, Bedford, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., thru Sept. 5.

**Sunday, September 5**  
 Cambria County Fair, Ebensburg, thru Sept. 11.  
 Spartansburg Community Fair, Spartansburg, thru Sept. 11.

**Monday, September 6**  
 Lancaster Farming office closed.  
 Ox Hill Community Fair, Waterford, thru Sept. 11.  
 West Alexander Fair, West Alexander, thru Sept. 11.  
 Flemington N.J. Fair Open Dairy Show, Fairgrounds, Flemington, N.J.

**Tuesday, September 7**  
 Claysburg Area Farm Show, Clay-

sburg, thru Sept. 11.  
 Jamestown Community Fair, Jamestown, thru Sept. 11.

**Wednesday, September 8**  
 Reading Fair Awards Banquet, Fleetwood Grange Hall, 7 p.m.  
 Bellwood Antis Farm Show, Bellwood, thru Sept. 11.  
 Luzerne County Fair, Dallas, thru Sept. 12.  
 Pike County Ag Fair, Bushkill, thru Sept. 12.

**Thursday, September 9**  
 Pa. Yorkshire Summer Show and Sale, Lebanon, thru Sept. 11.  
 Nittany Antique Machinery Association Inc. of Central Pa. Red Power Showdown, Penns Cave, Centre Hall, thru Sept. 12.

**Friday, September 10**  
 York Inter-State Fair, York, thru Sept. 19.  
 Mason-Dixon Historical Society Inc. 37th Annual Steam and Gas Roundup Show, Carroll County Farm Museum, thru Sept. 12.  
 43d Annual Thurmont and Emmitsburg Community Show, Catocin High School,

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

#### To Plant Cover Crops

Cover crops act as a nutrient bank, according to Robert Anderson, Lancaster County Extension Agronomy Agent. Cover crops are capable of using the leftover nitrogen from the previous crop season before it leaches into the ground water.

If the corn silage crop did not use all the nitrogen applied, it leaves some unused nitrate nitrogen in the soil profile. A cover crop will capture that nitrogen and use it for crop growth.

In the spring when the cover crop is killed with a herbicide or plowed down, the nitrogen is released back into the soil during the growing season for the next crop.

In addition, cover crops add organic matter to the soil. Whether the entire plant is left in the field or just the roots, this plant material adds organic matter to them soil. Organic matter adds water holding capacity to the soil. Provides food for soil microbes, improves soil structure and adds to the soil ability to hold nutrients. A little money for seed and a little time to plant are small costs to pay for the many returns that cover crops provide.

#### To Plant Cover Crops for Feed

Robert Anderson, Lancaster

Thurmont, Md., thru Sept. 12.  
 Community Drought Meetings, Hustontown Fire Hall, 9 a.m.-10:30 a.m., McConnellsburg Fire Hall, 10:30 a.m.-noon, Needmore Fire Hall, 1 p.m.-2:30 p.m.

**Saturday, September 11**

Woods Workshop Program, Cornerstone Forest Products, 9:30 a.m.

Farm-City Day, Herring Farms, Farmington.

3d Annual Celebration of Farming, Holcombe-Jimison Farmsstead Museum, Lambertville, N.J., 10 a.m.-5 p.m., also Sept. 12.

**Sunday, September 12**

PennAg Industries Convention, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Baltimore's Inner Harbor, thru Sept. 14.

**Monday, September 13**

Poultry Health and Management Seminar, Kreider's Restaurant, Manheim, noon.

Green Township Community Fair, Cookport, thru Sept. 18.

Live Cattle Evaluation, Byerly Brothers Meats, Lewisburg, carcass evaluation Sept. 20.

**Tuesday, September 14**

Albion Area Fair, Albion, thru Sept. 18.

Berlin Brothersvalley Community Fair, Berlin, thru Sept. 18.

Denver Community Fair, Denver, thru Sept. 18.

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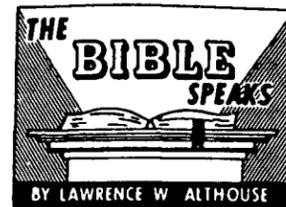
County Extension Agronomy Agent, reminds us cover crops may also provide additional forage for livestock feed. If the cover crop is harvested as a silage crop, the nitrogen it captures from the soil becomes a source of protein when fed to ruminant livestock.

When the cover crop is used to produce silage, not only is the nitrogen kept from leeching into the environment, the silage grown will replace purchased feeds at a very small cost to the producer.

Cover crops offer the most advantage when planted immediately after removing corn silage or tobacco.

#### To Invest in Assets

In a recent book review of the book *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* by Robert Kiyosaki, several observations were made on the differences on how middle class people and rich people view earning money.



WHERE'S YOUR HOLY GROUND?  
 September 5, 1999

#### Background Scripture:

Exodus 3

#### Devotional Reading:

Exodus 6:2-8

As I have said previously, sometimes we do not encounter God until we are down and out and have nowhere else to turn like Jacob, for instance, when he was fleeing from the wrath of his brother Esau. Joseph encountered God — although not for the first time, if we count his youthful prophetic dreams — when he was languishing in Egyptian captivity.

Moses, however, encountered God while he was uneventfully "keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian ..." (3:1). It was probably the most tranquil period in Moses' life. No more of the intrigues of the Pharaoh's court. No more running to escape justice for killing the Egyptian who persecuted his fellow Hebrews. Life with Ziporah and Jethro out in the wilderness was so uncomplicated in comparison with the life he had previously lived.

I have encountered God in both places: at the bottom of the pile and in the quietness of the wilderness. That doesn't mean that God had not tried to speak with me elsewhere and previously, but only that I had not heard or acknowledged him. In both anguish and silence I have encountered the God who at last was able to get my attention.

#### ATTENTION! ATTENTION!

The solitude of the wilderness can play tricks on us. We may see, hear and think things that would not occur to us anywhere else. This gives God a chance to get our attention. In the case of Moses, it was a desert bush that burned but was not consumed. When we visited St. Catherine's monastery in the Sinai desert a few years ago, the monks showed us a desert bush that burns without being consumed. It doesn't matter to me, however, if this was simply a little-known natural phenomenon, a hallucination or a supernatural experience. God was finally able to get Moses' attention.

Of course there was more to it than that. There was also Moses'

The thesis of the book is middle class people work for money and rich people have money work for them. Most people live their lives chasing paychecks, pay raises and job security. Kiyosaki says there are no get rich quick schemes, but learning the difference between assets and liabilities is very important.

Rich people acquire assets. Middle class people acquire liabilities, but they think they are assets. An asset puts money into your pocket. A liability takes money out of your pocket. Financial aptitude is what you do with your money once you make it, how you keep people from taking it from you, how long you keep it and how hard that money works for you.

*Feather Prof.'s Footnote: "If you are not riding the wave of change, you will find yourself beneath it."*

willingness to "turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt" (3:3). Moses could have reacted differently. He might have persuaded himself that the bush only appeared to be burning and persuaded himself that what he saw was not really happening.

Moses, however, did turn aside to observe what was happening and, when God called to him, he replied "Here am I." It is difficult for us to encounter God unless we are willing to turn aside to see what God may be doing in our midst, unless we are ready to answer, "Here I am."

#### ON HOLY GROUND

Moses' encounter with God may have begun with no higher motivation than curiosity, but it soon became a sense of awe and wonder. "Put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." This nondescript spot of wilderness was a place where Moses would encounter the Lord and he needed to respond with reverence. In ancient times fire was a phenomenon through which God sometimes revealed himself and taking off one's shoes was a sign of reverence.

The message of that divine-human encounter was both good news and bad news. First, the good news: God had heard the prayers of his afflicted people and he will redeem them from their Egyptian captivity. And, second, the bad news (at least for Moses): he had chosen Moses as the instrument of that redemption. Moses' overwhelming reaction to this bit of news is that he is unworthy and incapable of doing this job. He is right, of course, he is NOT worthy or up to this task. He doesn't have to be, for God promises: "But I will be with you" (3:12).

The key here is not Moses' self-sufficiency, but that of God. Whatever Moses needs to be for this task, God will provide (just as in the story of Abraham and Isaac God provided what was needed on the mountaintop). God makes that very same promise to us when he calls us — but first we must find the place in our lives that is holy ground.

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A Steinman Enterprise

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