



# OPINION

## World's Safest Drinking Water

Despite the tremendous surge in the popularity of bottled water—with annual sales of \$4.3 billion last year—America's tap water is still the safest in the world. Jon Capacasa writing in EPA Environmental news says President Clinton's pledge that all Americans are entitled to clean, pure water is one promise that has been kept. Nine out of 10 Americans enjoy water from large public water systems that consistently meet the highest quality of health standards.

On December 16, 1999, the U.S. Safe Drinking Water Act is 25 years old. A quarter century after we made safe water a priority, Americans are now getting an added benefit—water companies are required to notify their users—you and me—about the quality of the drinking water that they are providing to us. They also have to let the public know where their water comes from—whether from a lake, river or natural underground source—and how the water is treated to meet health standards.

With all of this safe water available, one irony with this craze for spending extra for bottled water is that 25% of the bottled water sold in the United States is actually repackaged tap water. Many of those little designer bottles of water started life at someone's spigot.

The United States has 54,000 community water systems that provide water for more than 252 million people. One out of five of these systems uses surface water, like lakes or rivers, for its water source. The remainder of the population is served by systems that pump water from underground.

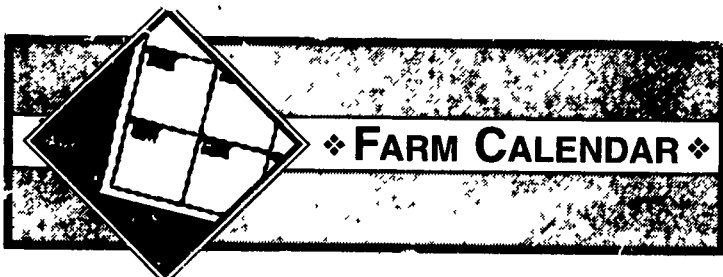
America's drinking water systems are the crown jewel of the environmental protection we enjoy in this country. The municipalities and companies that manage these systems have much to be proud of. They spend \$22 billion a year to provide safe water. Their increasingly sophisticated efforts help ensure that we are protected from new chemicals and disease-causing contaminants that barely existed 25 years ago.

In the past 25 years, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has set standards that water suppliers must meet to reduce threats from 90 contaminants like lead, mercury and PCBs. EPA estimates that nearly 75,000 outbreaks and more than a half million cases of widespread disease have been avoided in the past decade. For instance, epidemics of cholera and typhus—once common in cities—have been nearly eliminated in the United States. And exposure of children to lead in drinking water is significantly reduced. Moreover, improvements to our drinking water continue.

Despite America's tremendous accomplishment of safe water, new challenges to drinking water safety will emerge from a growing population, acid rain and urban sprawl. We will encounter new sources of contamination like runoff from factory farms and fertilized lawns. These pressures require that we remain vigilant and keep on protecting our sources of drinking water.

That means cleaning up rivers and streams, preventing pollution from spills and dumping, and learning where our drinking water comes from and how safe it really is.

The new consumer confidence reports issued by water companies are a good beginning. Continuing to earn the public's confidence in the drinking water safety network in this country is a key challenge for the coming years.



**Saturday, February 5**

Ephrata Area Young Farmers Annual Banquet, Mt. Airy Fire Hall, 7 p.m.

Pa. State Rabbit Convention, Lebanon Area Fairgrounds, thru Feb. 6.

**Sunday, February 6**

**Monday, February 7**

Annual Shade Tree Symposium, Lancaster Host Resort, Lancaster, thru Feb. 8.

New York State Vegetable Conference, Holiday Inn-Syracuse/Liverpool, thru Feb.

10. Southeast Pa. Grazing Conference, Solanco Fairgrounds, Quarryville, thru Feb. 8.

Octorara Young Farmers Association meeting, Hooper, Inc., 7:30 p.m.

**Tuesday, February 8**

Pennsylvania Corn and Soybean Conference, Penn Harris Inn, Camp Hill.

Pennsylvania Young Farmers Winter Conference, Kutztown Chapter, Kutztown School District, thru Feb. 10.

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

**To Consider Snowmobile Damage to Alfalfa**

Most winter activities do not pose much of a threat to agriculture, but the use of snowmobiles may be devastating to alfalfa, according to Robert Anderson, Lancaster County Extension Agronomy Agent. Riding a snowmobile across the snow will pack the snow down into a very dense cover. This dense cover on alfalfa fields hinders alfalfa from respiration and could result in the loss of alfalfa plants during the following season. Riding a snowmobile across an alfalfa field is a much smoother ride and undoubtedly more fun than riding across a corn field.

While riding your snowmobile consider the potential damage you are causing to the alfalfa and ride only on corn and other crops.

**To Look At Horse's First Shoes**

The horse's foot continues to increase in size until it is full grown at five or six years of age. According to Chester Hughes, Lancaster County Extension Livestock Agent, if the horse is shod during the growing years, shoes should be reset frequently and progressively larger shoes applied as needed. Ideally, growing horses should be shod only for short periods of time. It would be beneficial for horses to be shod all around during these periods, especially if they are doing any work that would cause the feet to wear down faster than they grow out.

Avoid waiting until the horse is sore to shoe it. Generally, first shoes should be light as well as give the desired protection to the foot. Aluminum shoes are often used. A rocker-toe is most desirable on young horses to ease break over and prevent forging. Forging is a fault of gait when the toe of the hind shoe strikes the bottom of the front shoe. Half round shoes are also used on the front feet to ease break over and prevent limb interference.

**To Consider Cold Weather Tips**

In extremely cold weather it is very important to keep the head covered and perhaps the face and mouth to prevent heat loss from the body.

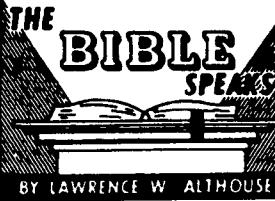
Robert Anderson, Lancaster County Extension Agronomy Agent, reminds us that the extremities of the body will cool faster than the rest of the body and must be protected with gloves, boots and ear flaps to prevent frostbite. When you know you will be out in the cold, always overdress.

It is easier to remove unneeded clothing than it is to get warm when extra clothing is not

available. Eye protection from glare of the sun can be very important on bright days, especially if the ground is snow covered. Being aware of the affect that the wind has on winter temperatures is very important. Blowing winds will make a cool day feel very cold. Thirty degrees will feel like minus two degrees

when the wind is blowing 30 miles per hour. Always have extra clothing in the car while driving during winter. Winter can be fun but a few precautions and some planning will improve your enjoyment of the outdoors.

*Feather Prof.'s Footnote: "It is impossible to learn what you think you already know."*



**A FATAL MISUNDERSTANDING**  
February 6, 2000

**Background Scripture: Matthew 21:1-17.**

**Devotional Reading: Luke 19:29-44.**

I have walked the traditional way from Bethphage to what was the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. As I have proceeded from the Mount of Olives down into the Kidron Valley and up to Mount Zion, I have pondered just what was and is the meaning of Jesus' Palm Sunday entrance into Jerusalem.

Was this procession really a "triumphal entry," as it is usually depicted? Or is this a moment of cruel mockery? Those of us who have the advantage of knowing what the disciples and the crowd could not have known—that it all would end on a cross—cannot enter comfortably into the spirit of joy that is recorded here. Whether this was an authentic moment of elation or an episode of ludicrous let's-pretend doesn't matter, for the cross of Calvary throws a deadly dark shadow over the path of the Palm Sunday procession.

What did Jesus make of all this? Was he hoping to confront the leaders of Jerusalem with the claims of the kingdom of God, forcing them either to repent and accept the "good news" or make the momentous mistake of setting themselves against it? Was it Jesus' intention to draw a sharp distinction between his own understanding of the messianic role and the erroneous expectations of those whose aims were more secular than spiritual?

**Sharp Contrast**

We will never know just what was in his heart and mind, but I think that it is obvious that Jesus was attempting to present himself and his mission in sharp contrast to the militant expectations of many of his contemporaries. His instructions to his two disciples appears to be a conscious, well-thought-out approach: "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find an ass tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me" (21:2). It even appears to me that he had already made arrangements with the owner of the ass and colt. "If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and he will send them immediately" (21:3).

Matthew sees in his action a fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Jerusalem! . . . Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he; humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass." (Note: you will find that Mark and Luke have Jesus asking only for one animal, a colt,

John calls the beast "a young ass.")

The best explanation of this obvious disagreement between singular and plural mounts, I believe, a simple editing error on the part of the writer of Matthew or a later editor.

I believe it very likely that Jesus himself chose to enter Jerusalem in this manner because of the Zechariah 9:9 passage which is acknowledged to present the "king" as a humble man of peace, not of physical or military power. Up to this point Jesus has been very careful to avoid the identification of 'messiah' because there was a world of difference between his understanding of that role and the expectations of most of the people. It is as if he is saying, if you want to see me as the Messiah, know that it this kind of Messiah that I come.

**Most Dangerous Day**

I believe Jesus knew full well that this was the most dangerous day of his life. He knew that the messiahship that he offered was not the messiahship that was expected. I do not think that he was carried away by the reactions of the crowds. Crowds are fickle; one moment they want to make you king; another they want to crucify you. Jesus knew that. Perhaps he hoped that, nevertheless, his choice of the role of the humble, peaceful 'king' would yet win them to his message of spiritual rule. Or, perhaps, he knew that nothing would change their minds and he simply proceeded with his entry to hold true to mission. Sometimes we have to do the right thing, even if we know it has little promise of convincing those who oppose our mission. We still have to make the witness so that our faithfulness to it is not in vain.

Whatever Jesus thought and expected, whatever the crowds thought and desired, the Palm Sunday procession was nevertheless a grand misunderstanding. It was not that Jesus had not clearly presented his message, but that the people didn't listen to it because their minds were occupied with their own apocalyptic schemes. Despite his careful plans, they turned this humble procession into a messianic demonstration. They tried to use him for their own expectations.

Both for them and for him, it was a fatal misunderstanding, the same kind of willful misunderstandings that are still all too often our response to the kingdom of God which he proclaims and offers to us today

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