

What "Nutrient Management" Means to Lancaster County

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Today in the season of government regulations, Pennsylvania's Act 6 Nutrient Management law perks up many ears of livestock operators and the non-agricultural community as well.

The term "Nutrient Management" is not a new, radical idea but has been around for some time now. Here in Lancaster County, the first organized nutrient management program started with the Rural Clean Water Program in 1981. This project addressed many factors that we look at today when an Act 6 plan is written.

The premise of many concerns of the non-farm community and government officials is that there is so many more animals being raised today than during the good old days of our great grandparents. Thus more animals equals more manure.

We also hear about diminishing agriculture acres, being used up by development, and would assume that that there surely is a problem with using all the nutrients in the manure. This is where a column written by Jeff Stoltzfus comes into play.

Jeff has a copy of a 1904 Yearbook of Agriculture that contains many statistics that the modern PA Statistical Summary does. When you compare the figures between

1904 and 1998, we find out that PA now has 467,700 less dairy cows, 437,500 less horses and mules, and 813,000 less sheep. The numbers do show an increase of 120,000 hogs and 276,500 cattle & calves (this excludes dairy cows).

Although acreage for crops have diminished by 3,304,000 acres or 44%, actual total crop production increased by 46%. In 1904, Pennsylvania farmers raised 30% more animals and grew 46% less crops.

Statistically, Pennsylvania as a whole has less of a problem with manure nutrients today than we did 96 years ago. (Source (1904 Yearbook of Agriculture)(1998-99 PA Statistical Summary, USDA, PDA) ("Just Like the Good Old Days" Jeff Stoltzfus, 10/1997 Livestock Reporter).

Through selective breeding and improved management and techniques, the agriculture community has increased yields of crops thus needing less land to produce more crops and less livestock to produce more food and fiber.

Fewer American farmers are now producing more food on less land for more people than ever before in history. The American public spends a smaller percentage of their income on food to feed their family than any other country in the world.

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in late summer-early fall, followed by MEGA-GREEN or CENTURY BMR Sorghum Sudangrass in Late Spring early Summer.

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