

Lancaster Farming

OPINION

The Farmer's Dilemma

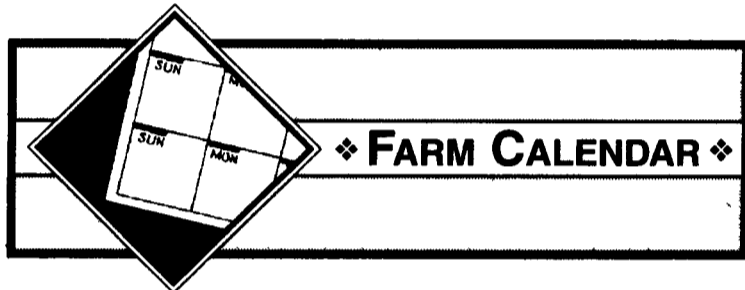
Imagine getting a pay cut for doing a good job. But that's what farmers face this year as they produce near-record crops of corn and soybeans.

In many parts of the country, yields are expected to be just short of record levels. This good job of production will likely flood the market and bring the lowest prices since the 1986 level of \$1.28 per bushel.

Allan Lines, ag economist from Ohio State University, says this all came about because we have had several good crop years beginning in 1996 and 1997. In 1998 we had near-record yields with another good crop in 1999. Now we add the better-than-excellent crop in 2000 and an explosive situation appears inevitable. We have more corn produced than we can consume.

Of course, government programs will help farmers with income because loan rates are above corn and soybean prices. And low prices encourage the use of crops for industrial purposes and give livestock producers lower input costs.

But this situation again brings to the front the eternal dilemma of agriculture. One farmer's loss is another farmer's gain. We need to find a way to raise prices enough at every farm gate, so all farm families can make a decent living at the occupation they love.



Saturday, September 16
2000 Maryland Wine Festival, Farm Museum, Westminster, Md., thru Sept. 17.

Pasture Walk, Don and Lugene Chamberlain, Mainesburg, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Pasture Walk and Biosolids Demonstration, Brent D'Atri Farm, Oldtown, Md., 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Touch of Autumn Craft Show, Hunterdon County Extension Center, Flemington, N.J., 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Sunday, September 17
122nd PennAg Convention, Princess Royale Oceanfront Hotel and Conference Center, Ocean City, Md., thru Sept. 19.

Gratz Fair, Gratz, thru Sept. 23.
Beaver Community Fair, thru Sept. 23.

Adams County Ag and Natural Resources Center Open House, Gettysburg, 2 p.m.-4 p.m.

Monday, September 18

Tuesday, September 19
Ohio Farm Science Review, Molly Caren Ag Center, London, thru Sept. 21.

Harmony Grange Fair, thru Sept. 23.

Lancaster County Honey Producers meeting, Lancaster County Environmental Center, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, September 20
Windmill Water System Tour, Terry Hoyt, New Albany.

Southern Lancaster County Fair, thru Sept. 22.

Thursday, September 21
Pa. Vet. Medical Association and Vet. Technicians and Assistants Association of Pa. 118th Annual Scientific Meeting, Lancaster Host Resort, Lancaster, thru Sept. 24.

Chester-Delaware Fall Banquet, West Fallowfield Christian Day School, 6:45 p.m.

Natural Products Expo East 2000, Baltimore Convention Center, thru Sept. 24.

Oley Valley Community Fair, thru Sept. 23.

Friday, September 22

Lebanon County Composting Workshop, Lebanon Valley Ag Center, 10 a.m.-noon, also Sept. 23, 9 a.m.-11 a.m.

Saturday, September 23
International Plastics Congress, Hershey Lodge and Convention Center, Hershey, thru Sept. 27.

All American Dairy Show, Farm Show Complex, Harrisburg, thru Sept. 28.

Lancaster Farmland Trust Old-Fashioned Farm Picnic, Roman and Lucy Stoltzfoos, Kinzers, 1 p.m.-5 p.m.

Bloomsburg Fair, thru Sept. 30.

1st Annual Fawn Grove Olde Tyme Days Fall Gas Engine and Garden Tractor Show, Fawn Grove, thru Sept. 24.

Dairy Princess Pageant, Sheraton Inn, Harrisburg, 5:30 p.m. reception, 6:30 p.m. banquet, 8 p.m. coronation.

Romano 4-H Center Benefit Auction, 4-H Center, Honey Brook.

Sunday, September 24

Monday, September 25
Pa. State Council of Farm Organizations Meeting, Capitol Building, Harrisburg, 11 a.m.

Tuesday, September 26
Pa. Holstein Fall Championship Show, Farm Show Complex, Harrisburg, 9 a.m.

Pa. Feeder Calf Roundup Tele-Auction Sale.

Ephrata Fair, Ephrata, thru Sept. 30.

Morrison Cove Community Fair, thru Sept. 29.

Lebanon Family Health Services Women's Workshop Series, Lebanon, 7 p.m.-8 p.m., also Oct. 24 and Nov. 14.

Wednesday, September 27
Eastern National Holstein Sale, Farm Show Complex, Harrisburg, 7 p.m.

West Lampeter Community Fair, thru Sept. 29.

Thursday, September 28
Eastern National Holstein Show, Farm Show Complex, Harrisburg, 8 a.m.

Friday, September 29
Tri-Valley Community Fair, thru Oct. 1.



Now Is The Time

By John Schwartz

Lancaster County
Agricultural Agent

To Beware Of Silo Gas

Silo filling is in full swing and with it comes the hidden danger of silo gas, reports Leon Ressler, Lancaster County extension agricultural agent.

Silo gas is formed by the natural fermentation of chopped forages in the silo. Several gases are formed and the type of silo the forage is stored in determines the amount of different gases.

In a conventional or open top silo, nitrogen dioxide is the major gas formed. A strong, bleach-like odor and low-lying yellow, red, or dark brown fumes characterize this gas. It reaches a peak about three days after filling and quickly begins to decrease shortly thereafter, especially if the silo is ventilated. After two weeks, it is unlikely that any gas will be formed but some could be pres-

ent if trapped and unable to escape the silo.

Nitrogen dioxide is dangerous because it causes severe irritation to the nose and throat and could cause inflammation of the lungs. It is especially dangerous because low-level exposure is often accompanied by only slight irritation and pain. Although death can occur immediately, a farmer could breathe the gas without any immediate serious symptoms and then die in his sleep hours later from fluid collecting in his lungs. Many victims have relapses one to two weeks after the initial exposure with symptoms similar to pneumonia.

If you are exposed to the gas it is critical that you seek medical attention.

To Be Safe Around Silos

Ideally everyone should avoid the silo during the critical period when gases are forming, reminds Leon Ressler, Lancaster County extension agricultural agent.

Since this is not always possible, it is best to use a self-contained breathing apparatus when entering during the danger period. This is the only breathing device that is certain to protect you from silo gases.

Dust masks or even chemical cartridge respirators do not provide sufficient protection and are not intended to be used where gases are extremely toxic or where the air has been replaced by gases like carbon dioxide.

If you do not have access to a self-contained breathing device, it is possible to enter the silo safely if the following precautions are followed.

First, ventilate the silo and ad-

acent areas by running the blower 20 minutes before entering. All doors should be opened down to the level of the settled silage and the windows to the feed room should be opened. Leave the blower running the entire time you are inside.

Never enter the silo unless another adult is present who can go for help if needed. This person should maintain visual contact with you. Although it will not protect you from silo gases, wear a dust mask or some other respirator to protect your lungs from high concentrations of dust and mold spores, which are found in silos and can affect your lungs.

To Make High Quality Silage

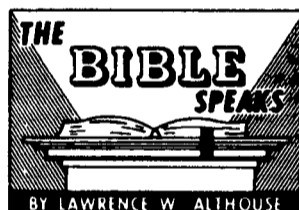
Silage making is hard and dangerous work, reminds Robert Anderson, Lancaster County extension agronomy agent.

Compounding the problem is often machinery breakdown, which further delays the operation. This stresses the need to practice preventative maintenance. By replacing worn parts before they break and following maintenance schedules, you can reduce loss time to breakdowns.

Remember, corn silage has its best quality when harvested at the optimum moisture level, chopped fine enough to pack well, and the storage facility is filled fast to exclude oxygen. Any delay in cutting silage and filling the silo can lower the quality of the feed and increase spoilage.

Feather Prof's Footnote: "Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."

— Thomas Edison



THE PERIL OF POWER

Background Scripture:

Judges 13 through 16.

Devotional Reading:

Psalms 145:14-20.

Some Bible stories are only instructive for us negatively. Like many of the parables of Jesus, they show us how *not* to, rather than how to. Such a story is the tragic tale of Samson, a man gifted by God, but unwilling to use his gift for the God who gave it to him. The story of Samson, thus, is very relevant for us and our time because it tells us how *not* to use the gifts God still bestows upon each of us.

The story begins well enough, once you get past the fact that "... the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord gave them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years" (13:1). God causes Manoah's barren wife to conceive a son, providing the couple will raise their son as a Nazirite, a child dedicated to the Lord with special vows. The story tells us that "the boy grew, and the Lord blessed him" (1-3:24) with the stirrings of God's Spirit. Samson soon gained a reputation for legendary physical strength.

Power Over Self

From this point, however, Samson's story takes on an increasingly negative tone. Despite his great physical power, Samson

seems to have little power over his own emotions. Seeing a young Philistine woman, he returns home and tells his father and mother: "I saw one of the daughters of the Philistines at Timnah; now get her for me as my wife." But his father and mother said to him, "Is there not a woman among the daughters of your kinsmen, or among all our people that you must take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" (14:1-3).

It was not right for a man dedicated to God that he should take a pagan wife from among Israel's greatest enemies. But Samson would have this Philistine woman whether or not his parents agreed.

Sound familiar? Some people have said that Samson's trouble was basically with women — three Philistine women, to be precise. His Philistine wife of Timnah betrayed Samson to her people. As a result of her treachery, he killed 30 men at Ashkelon and gave their possessions to the Philistines to whom he lost the bet on the riddle. Later, Samson visited a prostitute at Gaza and, when he was ambushed by Philistines at the city gates, he pulled them down to intimidate his enemies. Finally, he fell in love with Delilah, another Philistine woman, who repeatedly betrayed him.

Capricious Power

It is hard to be sympathetic with Samson over his three Philistine female nemeses for, like his fellow Israelites, he seemed incapable of learning from his experiences. Like Israel, he makes the same mistake over and over again. Like Israel, he betrays his special gifts from the Lord and stubbornly insists on

having his own way. Like Israel, he winds up doing what was evil in God's sight, using his God-given power, not for good, but for his own selfish wants.

Like Israel. Like us?

In the Interpreter's Bible, Vol. 2 (Abingdon-Cokesbury Press) Phillips P. Elliot observes that Samson "tore down more than he put up. He is the incarnation of the kind of power which is out of control. ... How strange that both this ancient giant and the great nations of today should face the same temptations and need the same restraint."

Both as individuals and as members of society we are faced with that temptation — to use our God-given power capriciously, to forget that power is a means, not an end.

Samson started out in life with everything going for him: a child born to barren parents and intended for a life of special service to God. But he used this power selfishly, capriciously, and arrogantly and his end is predictable: humiliated by his enemies, he uses his returning power for revenge against them, pulling down the house on his enemies and himself. It is a tragic end for someone so gifted, just as it is tragic when we use God's gifts so selfishly and irresponsibly.

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