

Lancaster Farming

OPINION

Pigs Are Not People

According to *Pigs Pen*, the November newsletter of the Pennsylvania Pork Producers Council (PPPC), a 300-pound pig was boarded into the cabin of a Boeing 757 and flown nonstop with 200 other passengers on a six-hour flight across the country. The pig's owner convinced the airline that the animal was a therapeutic companion pet, like a guide dog for the blind. Maybe a seeing eye pig, though we have never been cognitive of such an animal before.

The chagrined airline spokesman confirmed that the pig traveled, and officials said it would not happen again. An internal incident report said owners claimed they had a doctor's note that required them to fly with the animal. The report said the pig was described as a 13-pound pig and based on this info, authorization was given.

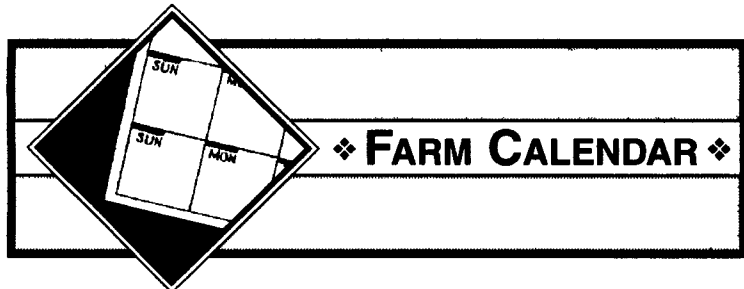
Baggage charges were waived and the pig was seated on the floor in the first row of first class. Reports vary on the animal's behavior during the flight. One report said the pig slept most of the time and it wasn't until the aircraft taxied into the ground terminal that the porker acted up — "madly run loose through the aircraft and tried to enter the cockpit."

It finally found refuge in the food galley, where it refused to budge. Someone then lured the pig from the galley with food, where the owners managed to drag it out of the aircraft and into the jetway. There it left a mess of you-know-what.

It is left to the Associated Press to report a few days later that the pig flying in first class was a Vietnamese potbellied pig, a breed somewhat known for its use as pets. And the owners deny that the pig behaved badly saying their pig did not run around the plane's isles or anywhere, for that matter.

We would smile at this story and forget it, except it serves as another great example of why pig farmers and the general public often do not agree on what is right treatment of pigs on the farm. This story again brings to the forefront the growing idea that pigs are people and they should be treated as humans, including giving them first-class seats on an airplane.

We believe pigs are most comfortable being pigs. The first-class cabin on a flight to anywhere is luxury accommodations for well-heeled humans. For pigs, it's torture.



Saturday, December 9
Lackawanna DHIA Banquet, Green Grove Grange, 7:45 p.m.

Sunday, December 10
2000 National Alfalfa Symposium, Las Vegas, Nev., thru Dec. 12.

Monday, December 11
Pa. State Council of Farm Organizations Meeting, PDA Building, Harrisburg, 11 a.m.

Tuesday, December 12
Introduction to Spreadsheets, Cumberland County extension office, thru Dec. 13.

Solanco Young Farmer meeting, Dairy Herd Management, Solanco High School, 7 p.m.

Basic Dairy Farm Management Workshop, Lancaster Farm and Home Center, 10a.m.-2:30 p.m., also Dec. 15, same times. Second Workshop Feb. 14 and 21, Farm and Home Center, 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Franklin County DHIA Banquet, Kauffman Community Center, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, December 13
2002 Crop Planning Workshop and Pesticide Update, Hugo's, Washington County, 9:30 a.m.-3:20 p.m. and 7 p.m.-9 p.m.

Pennsylvania Dairy Stakeholder's Conference, Holiday Inn,

Grantville, thru Dec. 14.

Annual Winter Seminar, Delaware Veterinary Medical Association, 8 a.m.

Delmarva Greenhouse Growers Meeting, Delaware Cooperative Extension, Georgetown, Del.

2000 Seed Council Annual Meeting, Comfort Inn/Sherwood Knoll Restaurant, Lancaster, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Passing On the Farm Workshop, Schuylkill County Cooperative Extension, Pottsville, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Pennsylvania Dairywomen's Association awards banquet, Holiday Inn, Grantville, 6:15 p.m.

Thursday, December 14
Cambria County Turf Update Meeting, Lemon Drop Lounge, Ebsburg.

Friday, December 15
Ag Chemical Compliance School, Holiday Inn, Grantville.

Adams County Holstein Club and DHIA Annual Meeting, Harney Fire Hall, Harney, Md.

Indiana County DHIA Banquet, Hoss's, 11 a.m.

Saturday, December 16
Susquehanna DHIA meeting, Drever Hall, Montrose, noon.

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To Test Homegrown Feed
This past growing year has been a welcome change from last year's drought.

The barns are full of feed. This should bring a welcome reduction in feed bills.

Do not let it become a reduction in milk production as well, reminds Jeff Stoltzfus, Eastern Lancaster County School District adult farmer adviser.

There has been a lot of research and discussion on the feed quality and digestibility of various corn hybrids. In addition, hay quality varies tremendously on the farm this year.

Molds and mycotoxins are also something you need to be on the lookout for in wrapped hay bales this year. Conditions were rarely ideal when

hay was made this year. If cows drop production quickly, change your hay source and have your bales tested for mycotoxins.

Farmers need to test their forages often this year. Find and use a good nutritionist. Do not let a bumper crop of homegrown feed turn into a homegrown problem.

To Understand Erosion
Many factors are associated with the amount of soil erosion a storm causes, reports Robert Anderson, Lancaster County extension agronomy agent.

First, the impact of the falling rain on the soil surface will dislodge soil particles and move them in a downhill direction caused by the splash effect. Second, once the soil particle is dislodged from the soil surface by the falling raindrop, any water flowing across the surface will carry the particle with it.

In addition, if the water is flowing fast enough it will also dislodge soil particles and move them downslope. The longer and steeper the hill, the faster the water will move and the more soil the water will take with it.

To Control Soil Erosion
The control of soil erosion involves many factors, according to Robert Anderson, Lancaster County extension agronomy agent.

The first thing that may be done to help reduce erosion is to lessen the impact of the falling raindrop. Many things

will help reduce the impact of the raindrop. Plants that are growing have foliage that will intercept the rain droplet and remove much of the energy it has accumulated falling from the sky. The closer the foliage is to the ground, the less impact energy the water will have when it falls off the foliage.

Another way to reduce the energy of the falling drop is to have some type of plant residue on the soil surface. In addition, plants that have a lot of roots near the surface will help hold the soil particles in place and make it harder for the raindrop to dislodge it. Once the impact of the falling raindrop is reduced, the effect of flowing water will need to be kept under control.

The USDA Natural Resources and Conservation Service has been using many practices to accomplish this, including terraces or diversions which shorten the length of the slope that the water is running down and waterways which keep a plant material barrier between the water and the soil. In addition, contour planting, no-till or reduced till planting, and contour strips have done a lot to reduce erosion caused by flowing water.

Often the most critical time for erosion is the winter months when crop cover is at its minimum. Cover crops and residue management are two economical ways to protect soil from erosion during winter months.

Feather Prof's Footnote:
"The single defining quality of leaders is the capacity to create and realize a vision."

visions." Like Mary, I, too, wanted to know just "what sort of greeting this might be."

It dawned upon me that I was promised, not that the cause of my anxiety would go away, but that I was not to fear because God would be with me. I will never know just what happened that night, but I received a message I very much needed.

No Guarantee
Neither did Gabriel guarantee her a peaceful, uneventful life as the mother of the "Son of the Most High." He says, "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you" (Lk. 1:28). Mary was "favored" by God and is promised that he "is with you." She was to find that receiving the favor of God does not necessarily guarantee a life of everything coming up roses. What is guaranteed is the presence of God in the midst of life's anxious moments.

Gabriel was not put off because Mary was troubled and cautious. Instead, he proclaimed: "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus..." (1:31). Mary rightly was confused by this pronouncement: "How can this be, since I have no husband?"

His reply must have been just as mystifying: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (1:35).

You and I probably have a better understanding of Gabriel's message than Mary, for we have heard the Christmas story for as long as we can remember. We know that Gabriel was announcing a unique divine/human encounter that would change the world. We also know, as Mary does not, that the story continues on to a cross on Golgotha and a tomb

from which God would raise up his Son in victory. All Mary knew was the promise: "the Lord is with you."

Nothing Impossible
Gabriel tells Mary of the miraculous experience of her "barren" kinswoman Elizabeth, who so late in life conceived a son. Gabriel's words drive home the assurance of the Lord's message to her: "For with God nothing will be impossible" (1:37). God can break through all the human and natural limitations. It doesn't matter whether you call it a "miracle" or a phenomenon that we do not understand. God's purpose will be fulfilled.

So, not because she fully understands just what Gabriel is telling her, nor because she knows just how it will all come to be, but because she trusts God she is willing to commit herself: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (1:38). ("I am the Lord's servant; as you have spoken, so be it" — New English Bible).

Perhaps today our response to Gabriel would be: "Put that in writing and I'll have my lawyers look it over." But cautious and questioning as she was, Mary put herself in God's hands. And so can we: so be it!

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