



OPINION

Quality To Shoot For

As we sat with some dairy farmers last week at the Lancaster DHIA meeting, talk, as it usually does, turned to the price of milk. "It could be better," said one farmer. And others agreed. And we agree.

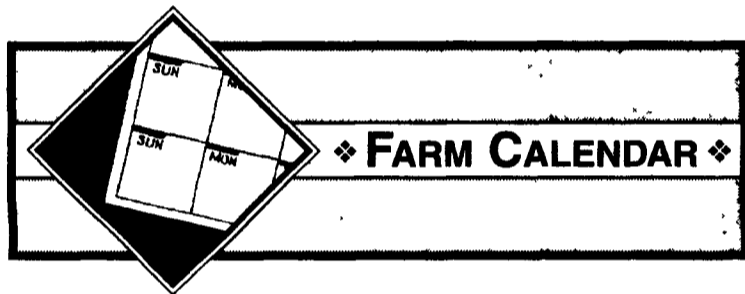
Dairy farmers today are participating in a very competitive marketplace. Not every farmer that is shipping into a federal order that uses multiple component pricing is getting the same price. That's because some farmers are producing component and quality levels that are above average, and others are producing below average.

Dr. Ken Bailey, extension milk marketing specialist at Penn State, recently indicated that the component price in your milk check can represent in some cases 80 to 90 percent of the total. The "range" in the component price received by farmers can be as high as \$2/CWT. The "range" in quality prices received can be as high as \$0.40/CWT.

We think the price for milk should be higher all the way around. But at least farmers can focus on what they can control — volume, components, and quality.

At the same meeting, Gary and Jenny Bowman were honored for their low SCC count of 75,000. Now that's quality to shoot for.

We commend the Bowmans and all dairy farmers who continue to do such a superb job of providing consumers with quality milk at a very reasonable price. Often so reasonable they must go out of business because the profit margin is so low.



Saturday, December 16
Susquehanna DHIA meeting, Dreyer Hall, Montrose, noon.
Sunday, December 17

Monday, December 18
Octorara Young Farmers Annual Dairy Meeting, Vo-Ag Dept., Octorara High School, 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 19
Ephrata Area Young Farmers Christmas Event, Stevens Fire Hall, 7 p.m.

LanChester Pork Council Meeting, Yoder's Restaurant, New Holland, 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

Manure Hauler Certification Training, Lighthouse Restaurant, Chambersburg.

Wednesday, December 20
CTAP Computer Conference, William T. Bainbridge Technology Center, Meadville.

Pennsylvania Beef Council Annual Dinner and Meeting, Holiday Inn, Grantville.

Thursday, December 21
CTAP 2000, Computer Technology for Agricultural Producers Conference, Penn State Fayette Campus, Uniontown.

Regional Agronomy Meetings, Community Center, Williamsfield, 8:30 a.m.-3:15 p.m.

Friday, December 22

Saturday, December 23

Sunday, December 24

Monday, December 25
Merry Christmas!
Lancaster Farming office closed.
Tuesday, December 26

Wednesday, December 27

Thursday, December 28

Friday, December 29

Saturday, December 30

Sunday, December 31

Monday, January 1
Happy New Year!
Lancaster Farming office closed.

Tuesday, January 2
Solanco Young Farmer Meeting, Accelerated Calf Grower, Solanco High School, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, January 3
Lancaster County Tobacco Show, Farm and Home Center.

Farm Financial Management Using Computers, Cumberland County extension office, thru Jan. 4.

Thursday, January 4
Dairy Feeding Employee Training, Mason-Dixon Farm, Adams County.

Friday, January 5
Dairy Feeding Employee Training, Mason-Dixon Farm, Adams County.

Franklin County Dairy Day, Kauffman Community Center.

Saturday, January 6
Pennsylvania State Farm Show, Farm Show Complex, Harrisburg, 9 a.m.-9 p.m., thru Jan. 11.

Pennsylvania Hereford Association Meeting and Banquet, Harrisburg Marriott.

Sunday, January 7
Pennsylvania Angus Association Membership Banquet, Holiday Inn, Grantville, 5:30 p.m.

Monday, January 8

Tuesday, January 9

Wednesday, January 10

Thursday, January 11

Friday, January 12

Saturday, January 13



Now Is The Time
By John Schwartz
Lancaster County Agricultural Agent

To Look At Economics Of Alfalfa Seed

How much is the new high technology alfalfa seed variety worth?

Can you afford to stay with the old type varieties, which are not designed to combat an insect or disease?

According to Dr. Marvin Hall, Penn State extension forage specialist, you may be able to buy some older alfalfa varieties for one-third the cost of the newer varieties, but in the long run you are not really saving money!

Assuming a cost of \$3 per pound for newer, highly disease resistant seed and \$1 per pound for an older seed, seeding rate of 15 pounds per acre and \$80 per ton value of hay, the newer variety of seed would generate almost \$300 additional income per

acre over a four-year period. This is because of increased production in the third and fourth years.

In addition to the new varieties being higher yielding and more disease resistant than the older varieties, they also increase the life expectancy of the alfalfa stand. The longer the stand can remain productive, the more years you have to spread out the cost of establishment.

Remember, the seed cost is really a very small part of the total cost of producing alfalfa. Information on the performance of alfalfa varieties is available at your county Penn State Cooperative Extension office. Ask for the Forage Trail Report.

To Protect Against Insects

As winter approaches, many insects are searching for a warm, sheltered location to be protected from the cold, according to Dr. Timothy Elkner, Lancaster County extension horticultural agent.

Many people discover that these insects find their homes the ideal spot for a winter vacation. The best control method is to seal insects out in the first place. Inspect the perimeter of your house for cracks, especially those at or just above ground level. Tiny pests can slip unnoticed through holes around utility cables and windows. Seal all openings you find.

Besides shelter, some invading insects are also looking for secure nesting sites. To make your home less accessible to them, keep house-hugging shrubs trimmed. Move mulch away from the foundation. Do not stack firewood against the house and inspect fireplace logs for

hitchhiking insects before bringing them in.

To Protect Against Mice

Fall also is the time when mice seek warmer shelter and a guaranteed food supply, reported Dr. Timothy Elkner, Lancaster County extension horticultural agent.

These tiny rodents cause damage with their gnawing and spoil food supplies with their droppings. Mice are excellent climbers and they can scale vertical surfaces, scamper across pipes and power lines, and squeeze through holes as small as a fourth of an inch in diameter.

Dark, grain-size droppings in cabinets and drawers are a sign that mice are in the house. Hoarded food piles and nests of shredded paper or cloth are further evidence.

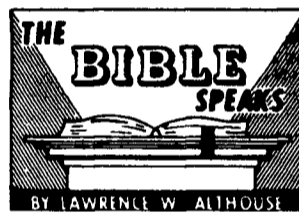
Prevention is the best control. Seal all entries into the house. Steel wool stuffed firmly into a small opening makes a good temporary barrier against mice.

It is also helpful to limit their potential food sources. Store pet food and bird seed in sealed containers and clean up spills immediately.

If mice are living in your house, set traps in areas where they are active, particularly along walls and on ledges. Bait the traps with peanut butter, bacon, or milk chocolate. Then check the trap daily to dispose of the catch and renew the bait.

Poison baits are not recommended for homes. They present a danger to children and dead mice may end up behind walls or under floors.

Feather Prof's Footnote: "The person who achieves the most is generally the one who is willing to do and dare."



STRONG ARM

Background Scripture:
Luke 1:39-56.
Devotional Reading:
Psalms 34:1-3.

Although Mary had overcome her doubts and committed herself to God's purpose — "I am the Lord's servant; as you have spoken, so be it" (NEB) — she doubtless was confused and wanted help in understanding what this was all about. Told by the angel Gabriel that her "kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son" and was in her sixth month of pregnancy, Mary immediately makes a journey to see her kinswoman, no doubt hopeful that she can help her understand what Gabriel told her.

Arriving in Ein Karem (the traditional home of John the Baptist's parents), she no sooner entered the house and greeted her kinswoman than Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and proclaimed to Mary: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (1:41-43).

Luke does not tell us that Elizabeth knew anything about Mary's visit from Gabriel, so this pronouncement and the sensation of the unborn John leaping in her womb comes to her by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth was able to salute Mary and her unborn son because she was open to the leading of God's Spirit.

Sometimes, I have found,

when we are attuned to God's presence, we can "know" something that we do not know. There is another factor that may have opened Elizabeth to the Spirit: she was humble — "And why is this granted me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

Magnificat!

Mary's response to Elizabeth is also probably an inspiration from the Holy Spirit. This is not the kind of utterance one might expect from a humble, young country girl: "My soul rejoices the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (1:46,47).

If you are familiar with the prayer of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1-10, you will find Mary's utterance quite similar in form and content. The passage in Luke is often referred as the Magnificat, the Latin form of the word, "magnifies." The Jerusalem Bible renders this as "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord..."

Phillips reads it as "My heart is overflowing with praise of my Lord" and the New English Bible as "Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord." This is not something Mary wrote on the back of an envelope and memorized on her journey to Ein Karem. It is of God.

Mary's song is a message, not for the rich and famous, the VIP's, the movers and shakers. It is a message for the same people to whom her son would later address his beatitudes, the meek and lowly. Her ecstatic song is one of wonder and awe for what the mighty God has done in her humble life: "he has regarded the low estate of his handmaid." "For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name" (1:49).

But the message of Mary's Magnificat is also a somber warning to those who are not poor and lowly. When the power of God's arm is unleashed in the world, this is what happens: (1)

"he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their own hearts"; (2) "he has put down the mighty from their thrones"; (3) "and exalted those of low degree"; (4) "he has filled the hungry with good things"; (5) "and the rich he has sent empty away".

Promised By God

No one should be particularly surprised at this shattering news in Mary's song, for all these things have been promised by God from the very beginning: "He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity for ever" (1:54,55). This is the promise of the covenant which God gave to Abraham (see Genesis 17:7; 18:18; Micah 7:20), the promise fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

It may be difficult for us to take assurance in God's promises to us when, all about us, there is tyranny visited upon the powerless, injustice to those who cannot pay for justice, and the poor getting poorer and the rich getting richer. But if we look at the history of our world we will see that God's covenant promises are fulfilled in the long run.

The Caesars, Holy Roman Emperors, Ghengis Khans, Napoleons, Hitlers, and Stalins have their day but, in God's sight, it is only a day. God's strong arm guarantees that.

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