



OPINION

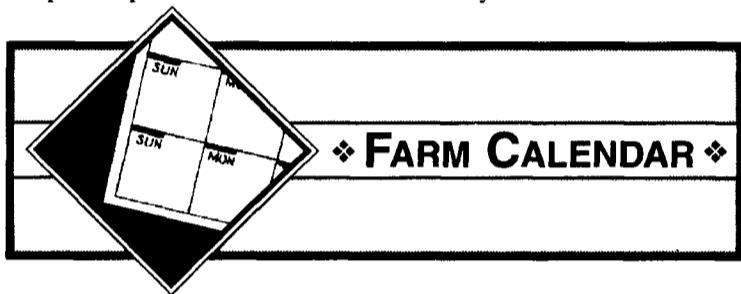
Beef Agenda

The Pennsylvania Cattlemen's Association has a legislative agenda that we think would benefit all farmers.

Items on their list include:

- Private Property Rights — Legislation protecting private property rights is a top priority as the right to own and use property is fundamental to the American way of life and is vital to beef producers. Work is in progress on legislation that allows for compensation, litigation relief, and no net-loss in private property.
- Death Tax Elimination — Total elimination of the death tax remains a top priority with the new Congress. Significant reductions have already been gained in both the estate and capital gains taxes. Achieving full deductibility of health insurance for the self-employed, like cattlemen, is also a priority tax relief issue.
- Exports — NCBA is working aggressively to gain access to emerging markets. U.S. beef and variety meat exports through August 2000 increased 22 percent in volume and 25 percent in value compared to exports through August 1999.
- Environmental Issues — Working to ensure site-specific, science-based standards for total maximum daily loads, effluent limitation guidelines, CAFO guidelines, and endangered species rules.
- Beef Labeling — NCBA is working to limit the usage of the USDA grade to U.S. cattle only.

We commend the beef farmers on their efforts to make farming more profitable and more free from unnecessary restrictions that hamper the production of food in this country.



❖ FARM CALENDAR ❖

Saturday, January 20

- Crop Insurance Seminar, Penn State Fogelsville Campus.
- Butler County Pa. Holstein Association Meeting, Garden Gate Restaurant, Prospect, 11:30 a.m.
- Clarion/Venango Pa. Holstein Association Annual Meeting, Wolf's Den Restaurant, Knox, 7:30 p.m.
- Maple Production School Satellite Conference Program, Bradford County extension office, Towanda, 9:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

Sunday, January 21

Monday, January 22

- Farm Computerized Accounting Workshop, York Extension Office, also Jan. 25, 29, and Feb. 2.
- Octorara Young Farmer Meeting, Octorara High School, 7:30 p.m.
- Computer Workshop, Cambria County extension, Ebensburg, also Jan. 25.
- Northeastern Pennsylvania Maple Syrup Producers' Association annual Meeting and Dinner, Bethany Methodist Church Hall, 10:15 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Tuesday, January 23

- Decisions 2001 Conference, Days Inn and Conference Center, Allentown.
- Franklin County Corn Clinic, Kauffman Community Center.
- Ag Day, Clarks Mills UM Church, Clarks Mills.
- Computer Workshop, Somerset Technical School, also Jan. 24.
- Troubleshooting Dairy Reproduction Meeting, Berks County Ag Center, 10:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Session 2 is at the Tulpehocken High School Library, 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, January 24

- Cooperative Business and Leadership Institute, Penn State Conference Center, thru Jan. 26.
- Milking Management Work-

- shop, Donohoe Center.
- Northumberland County Conservation District and Eastern Industries Workshop, Otterbein UM church, Sunbury, 8:30 a.m.
- Expansion II Conference, Edgewood Restaurant, Troy, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
- Crop Insurance Seminar, Neshaminy Manor Center, 7:30 p.m.
- Crop Insurance Seminar, Penn State Schuylkill County extension, Pottsville, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
- Troubleshooting Dairy Reproduction Meeting, Honey Brook Township Building, 10:30 a.m.-2 p.m.
- Pesticide credit meeting, Montgomery County 4-H Center.

Thursday, January 25

- Northeastern Pa. Turf School and Trade Show, The Woodlands Inn and Resort, Wilkes-Barre.
- Dairy Reproduction Meeting, Neshaminy Manor Center, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
- Capitol Region Greenhouse Meeting, tour of Esbenshade's Greenhouses, Brickerville.
- Environmental Livestock Certification Course, Lancaster Farm and Home Center, 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.
- Workshop on Comprehensive Water Management Plan for Lower Susquehanna Basin, Wildwood Conference Center, Harrisburg Area Community College, Harrisburg, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Troubleshooting Dairy Reproduction Meeting, Neshaminy Manor Center, Doylestown, 10:30 a.m.-2 p.m.
- Hog Producers Meeting, Garrett Community College Advanced Technology Center, 7 p.m.

Friday, January 26

- Franklin County extension annual meeting, Kauffman Community Center, 6:15 p.m.
- Cecil County's Producers' Breakfast, Schaefer's Canal

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Now Is The Time

By John Schwartz

Lancaster County Agricultural Agent

To Recognize Farmland Preservation

A record 83 Lancaster County farms were preserved in 2000. This brings the total of preserved farms in the county to 456, representing more than 37,000 acres.

This is a great success story of two organizations working together to make this happen.

The Lancaster County Agricultural Preserve Board, formed in 1980, handles the county and state funds appropriated for farmland preservation. This past year saw a large increase in both county and state funds available for farmland preservation.

The Lancaster Farmland Trust formed in 1988 is a private, nonprofit organization that uses tax incentives to encourage farm-

ers to donate their easements to the trust. In addition to preserving 83 farms this year, the Agricultural Preserve Board received more than 120 additional applications in September 2000.

This demonstrates that farmland preservation has become a legitimate and viable option for county farmers. By preserving farms, we are insuring the future of the county's agriculture. It demonstrates the county's support and optimism that agriculture will be a very important part of the county's economy. It is important to protect our farmland in the East, because we are one of the few areas in this country that can sustain agriculture because of our soils and climate.

To Realize The Importance Of Preserving Farms

Lancaster County, Pennsylvania and Portland, Ore. shows the importance and impact a strong farmland preservation program has on the area.

By using urban growth boundaries and farmland preservation techniques, these two areas have seen strong agricultural growth along with an increase in population.

However, these areas have used less land to accomplish this growth than similar metropolitan areas. Also, these similar metropolitan areas have seen a decline in their agricultural production. As Ron Bailey, director of the Lancaster County Planning Commission, reports, growth is not bad, but how we plan for growth is the key. By keeping farmland surrounding communities instead of communities surrounding farmland is what

helps to keep farming growing in a county.

By preserving farmland we are planning for the farm business to last more than one generation. This allows farmers to make the long-term investments needed to keep their farms profitable. It also allows public officials to develop public policy to encourage and support agriculture in their areas. Farmland preservation is planning for the future and the sustainability of our farms and our country.

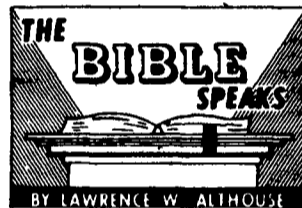
To Form Ag Security Areas

If you are not in an Agricultural Security Area and plan on farming, you should seriously consider forming or joining an Agricultural Security Area.

The Agricultural Security Area gives farmers additional protection to conduct their farming operations. An Agricultural Security Area does not limit land use options to the farmer or place any restrictions on his deed. The area designation informs people that agriculture is the primary use of land and government is to promote agriculture by enacting ordinances that support and encourage agriculture.

With the increasing populations in rural areas, township supervisors are being forced to consider ordinances that will limit the sustainability and profitability of farms. Now is the time to work with other farmers in your township and form Agricultural Security Areas to insure the future of farming in your township.

Feather Prof's Footnote: "Success does not come to you. You must go get it."



THE PRODIGAL FATHER

Background Scripture:

Luke 15.

Devotional Reading:

Ephesians 1:15-22.

No, that is not a typographical or editorial mistake in the title. I really mean to think with you about the Prodigal Father, not the Prodigal Son.

Actually, I think this well-known parable of Jesus may well be misnamed. Perhaps the key is to be found in the meaning of the word "prodigal." Apart from this parable, it is seldom used in our society today and perhaps that is why we have such a limited concept of what it means.

When we call the youth in this story the "Prodigal Son," what do we mean by the term "prodigal?" My Thesaurus suggests the following: "extravagant," "wasteful," "improvident," "profligate," "spendthrift" and "excessive." That is a pretty good description of this young man, isn't it?

Luke says "he squandered his property in loose living" (13b). But the adjective "prodigal" does not have to be a negative description, for my Thesaurus also suggests some positive synonyms, too: "free," "prodigious," "openhanded," "unselfish," "bountiful," "profuse," and "copious."

Applying "prodigal" to the love of the father for his wayward son indicates that his love was more bountiful than the failures of his son. The Father was a greater forgiver than the son was a sinner. Yes, the Father's love was extravagant, beyond any legal or ethical claim. Another name for it is "grace" — God's

amazing grace that makes it possible to return to the Father's house.

Going Home Again

Two years ago I was invited to return to and preach at my last pastorate in Pennsylvania. Naturally, though I realized that there had been changes since I left, I regarded this as a homecoming. But I was unprepared for the congregation I faced that Sunday morning — here and there a familiar face or family. But for the most part, it was hardly the congregation I remembered.

I was reminded of Thomas Wolfe's famous novel, "You Can't Go Home Again." For much of life that is certainly true: you cannot go home again and find it just as you left it.

Yet, this parable tells us that there is one sense in which we can always go home again. No matter how much time had elapsed, how he had squandered his inheritance, and how "loose" his living had been, the younger son was able not only to head home again but was welcomed with open arms. The Father had not come after him to drag him back, for the decision to return would have to be his own. Luke tells us that in the midst of his degradation, the son "came to himself and said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger?'" (17).

The Jerusalem Bible, Phillips, New English Bible, and Moffatt all translate 15:17 as "then he came to his senses." Isn't it strange how, when he are caught up in an obsession with self-gratification, we behave in such a nonsensical manner so contrary to the best that we know? It is as if we become temporarily insane. But, like the younger son, we can also come to our senses and realize that we can always go home again to the Father's house.

Now we might wish Jesus had pictured the younger son as conscience-stricken and repentant. Maybe he was, but Luke doesn't tell us. He just says that the son at last realizes how much better off he would be in his father's house, even as a servant.

You might decide that he wasn't really repentant, but was smart enough to know what he had to do to get out of the hole into which he had dug himself. If that is the most we can say about him, I would still have to say "good for him," for some people don't even have enough gumption to turn away from their profligacy and begin the trip back home. Instead of turning toward home, they dig in their heels and wait for the world to change instead.

When I read Robert Ardrey's book, "The Territorial Imperative," I remember him telling of the bird known as the Manx shearwater that was captured on Skokholm Island off the coast of Wales and flown by jet plane to Harvard University to be studied. But arriving in Boston, the shearwater flew 3,050 miles across the Atlantic and, maintaining a speed of 244 miles per day, arrived back at Skokholm Island 12 and one-half days later.

God has also given us the same gift of grace. As John Newton wrote the familiar hymn, "Amazing Grace":

" 'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far,

And grace will lead me home."

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—by—

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Turning Around