



OPINION

A Valid Vote?

Penn State Lancaster County, through the work of agent Chet Hughes, recently released commentary on the pork referendum conducted in the fall last year.

Recently *Lancaster Farming* reported that the referendum resulted in a rejection of the pork checkoff.

It's interesting that, according to Hughes, some producer groups disagree with the action and have filed for legal action against the USDA. On Jan. 12 this year, the National Pork Producers Council, Michigan Pork Producers Association, and some independent producers filed for a temporary restraining order and a preliminary injunction, preserving the status quo and enjoining the termination of the pork checkoff program until a "full and fair hearing has occurred."

NPPC President Craig Jarolimek claims that only one in seven pork producers actually voted against the program and "the majority of pork producers have not been heard from."

In Pennsylvania, 286 votes were cast for termination of the checkoff and 191 voted for continuance. Lancaster County, a prominent pork production region, voted 35 for termination, 24 to continue. A balanced vote for the county. Nevertheless, Hughes is careful to note it was obvious that voter turnout was "sparse."

Plenty of publicity about the referendum was published here and in other newspapers. Yet still the voter turnout was sparse.

By the way: the injunction contends that USDA has acted unlawfully in holding a binding referendum despite having no legal authority to do so, Hughes noted. It further claims the referendum was conducted in a manner filled with irregularities, which failed to apply consistent standards, or to count all lawfully cast ballots. Hughes notes: "does this all sound familiar?"

If the checkoff is canceled, producers can be affected in ways unknown. What happens now?

And for those producers who missed the vote — if the educational and research programs are affected in detrimental ways, don't you wish you had more say?

◆ FARM CALENDAR ◆

Saturday, January 27

Fifth Annual Forest Landowner Conference, Penn State Erie, The Behrend College, Erie, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

Bradford County Holstein Association annual meeting, Bonanza Restaurant, Wysox, 11:30 a.m.

Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey Annual Winter Conference, Cook College Campus Center, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J., 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Sunday, January 28

Beef Educational Evening, Bernville Grange.

Adams County Corn Clinic, York Springs Fire Hall, 8:30 a.m.-2:45 p.m.

Tuesday, January 30

NRAES Conference, Milking Systems and Parlors, Radisson, Camp Hill, also Jan. 31 and Feb. 1.

Solanco Young Farmer meeting, Farm Business Management, Solanco High School, 7 p.m.

Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention, Hershey Lodge and Convention Center, thru Feb. 1.

Cattle Feeders Day, Farm and Home Center, Lancaster, 9:30 a.m.-3:15 p.m.

Capitol Region Soybean Management School, Lebanon Valley Ag Center, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Wine Grape Day at Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention, Hershey Lodge and Convention Center, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Quality Hay Marketing, Holiday

Inn, Phillipsburg, N.J., 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Berks County Crops Day, Berks County Ag Center, Leesport, 9 a.m.

Mount Joy Farmers' Cooperative annual meeting, Yoder's Restaurant, New Holland, 11:30 a.m.

Ephrata Area Young Farmer luncheon meeting, Ephrata High School, 11:45 a.m.-1 p.m.

Well-Plugging Program, Lion's Den, Sheffield, 7 p.m.

Perry County Extension annual meeting, Messiah Lutheran Church, Elliptsburg, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, January 31

Mount Joy Farmers' Cooperative annual meeting, East Fairview Church of the Brethren, Manheim.

2001 Southwest Beef Management Workshop, Session 1, Cedarbrook Golf Course, Belle Vernon.

Symposium On Profitability, Holiday Inn, Grantville.

Bucks-Montgomery Crops Day, Family Heritage Restaurant, Franconia.

Tioga County Dairy Day, Whitneyville Fairgrounds, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Lancaster Chamber of Commerce and Industry's 2001 Farm Business Management School, Leola Family Restaurant, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Individual Farmer Nutrient Management Certification Training Workshops, Vicksburg Community Center, Vicksburg, also Feb. 7-8.

Fulton and Lebanon Valley Farmers' Bank Luncheon Seminar, Lebanon Valley

Now Is The Time

By John Schwartz

Lancaster County Agricultural Agent

To Look At 10 Keys Of Profitable Dairying

According to Bradley Hilty, Penn State Dairy Alliance senior associate, by focusing on 10 key management practices, dairy producers can build a profitable business and insure they will survive the tough times and prosper when times are good.

These 10 keys are:

1. Develop a strategic business plan. Developing a plan forces the farmer to look into the future and visualize where they would like to be in five to 10 years.
2. Control the controllables: production, efficiency, and marketing. Develop a good marketing strategy using the risk management tools available.
3. Maximize forage quality and feed a balanced ration.

To Control Phosphorus Levels

Glenn Shirk, Lancaster County extension dairy agent, reports feeding phosphorus (P) at excessive levels increases feed costs and contributes to excess buildup of P in the soil.

Farmers need to address this situation by following the new National Research Council (NRC) guidelines for dietary P. Many dairy farmers feed cows more P than needed. For high producing cows in early lactation, the new NRC recommendation for P is 0.38 percent compared to 0.48 percent in 1989. Cows fed the lower rate for three years showed normal bone strength and P levels.

Lowering the dietary level of P reduced P excretion and feed

4. Insure cow comfort.
5. Information management: know your cost of production. Compare production costs and figures for other key indicators to those of the top 10 percent of profitable dairies.
6. Implement a management team. The team can help develop strategies that will help improve the profitability of the farm.
7. Make wise investments. Analyze every investment to determine the return it will generate. What is the payback period? Large investments should have a payback period of 7 to 8 years.
8. Do enterprise analysis.
9. Emphasize your strengths.
10. Manage your expenses. A good benchmark is to manage expenses (less interest and depreciation) to 65 percent of income.

costs without adversely affecting milk production or reproduction. In the past, the level and availability of P in feedstuffs was not well defined.

Recent research indicates that P in many feedstuffs is much more available than originally thought. On many farms and for many cows, the forage portion of the ration may supply all the P cows need.

Consult your nutritionist for advice on fine-tuning the P levels of your rations.

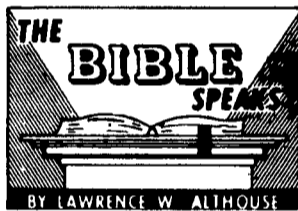
To Look At Dry Matter Intake

Good dry matter intake is the key to good milk production, according to Glenn Shirk, Lancaster County extension dairy agent.

If cows do not consume it, they cannot convert it to milk. It is that simple. Dry matter intake may be affected greatly by moisture content of feeds, especially high moisture feeds.

For example, if cows are being fed 40 pounds of silage at 60 percent moisture (40 percent dry matter), they are consuming 16 pounds of dry matter (40 pounds times 0.4 equals 16). If the moisture jumps to 70 percent (30 percent dry matter) and feeding rates are not adjusted, dry matter intake drops to 12 pounds. At 2.5 pounds of milk per pound of dry matter intake, this decrease in dry matter intake will cause a 10-pound drop in milk production (4 times 2.5).

Feather Prof's Footnote: "Progress is not where we stand, but in what direction we are moving."



DON'T BE STUPID!

Background Scripture: Luke 16.
Devotional Reading: Luke 12:15-21.

Ten years ago, Valere and I were victims of pickpockets in Lisbon, Portugal. Riding a streetcar, we were packed tightly with a number of passengers. When we returned to our hotel, we found that they had taken my cash and Valere's wallet in her purse. At first we couldn't believe it.

Whoever stole Valere's wallet had managed what seemed an impossible feat: they had gotten up under her cape, somehow under or through her jacket, and into her purse that was closed with a clasp. All the while we were quite unaware. We couldn't help feeling that such bad people could be so good at the bad they were doing.

When we look at Luke 16:1-13, we find this a different kind of parable than most. While the parable of the Good Samaritan is a story of a good example, that of the Dishonest Steward is not. The "rich man" in the parable is not God or Christ and the follower of Jesus is *not* intended to behave as the Dishonest Steward did.

Sons Of Light

So this is not a parable of example but of analogy. They key is in 16:8b: "for the sons of this world are wiser in their own generation than the sons of light."

The "sons of the world" are the

worldly people who are dedicated to material rather than spiritual values. The "sons of light" are those who are not of the world, but for a time live in it. All too often they are inept in living in the here and now, while the "sons of the world," like our pickpockets, are often very good at what they do. Frequently they are more dedicated to their ignoble ends than are the "sons of light" to their spiritual ends.

All of Luke 16 is about the right use of material wealth. Just because we have a spiritual destiny doesn't mean that the followers of Jesus can be indifferent or negligent in the way that they use material wealth. Although this world is not our final destination, there is nothing that says we have to be stupid in the way we live while we are here.

Even when Jesus says, "And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations," (16:9), he not telling us to use our material possessions to buy friends in the material world, but to better qualify ourselves for the life "in the eternal habitations."

Lovers Of Money

The follower of Jesus must not love money itself, but he or she should not fail to use it for good purposes. "The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this," Luke tells us. That is the problem: loving money and material wealth to the point that it rules us rather than the other way around.

"No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (16:13). In these words Jesus once again throws down the challenge of radical discipleship: serve him and him alone!

The Parable of the Rich Man

and Lazarus (16:19-31) is another demonstration, this time by bad example. The Rich Man was apparently good at amassing and keeping his wealth. The principles by which he lived assured him of a high old time here on earth. Lazarus, by contrast, was one of the "children of light." Actually, Lazarus presented the Rich Man with an opportunity to use his wealth for long-run security. But he passed up his chance. In the long run, he paid a terrible price for his worldly stewardship.

In John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, we find this demonstrated in three characters. Worldly-Wiseman is a "son of darkness," a man who, like the dishonest steward, skillfully feathered his earthly nest. He planned for the future, but it was the wrong future, a future outside the Celestial City. Ignorance, on the other hand, was a Christian, but he had no zeal, no zest for life, no involvement in this world. Detached from the world, he was amazed to find the gates of the Celestial City closed against him. Christian, however, sought God with the same dedication and energy with which others seek wealth and success, and the gates of the Celestial City were opened to him.

Where is it written that the followers of Jesus Christ have to be inept at living in this world, leaving it by default to the "sons of darkness?"

Lancaster Farming

Established 1955

Published Every Saturday

Ephrata Review Building
1 E. Main St.
Ephrata, PA 17522

—by—

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Everett R. Newswanger Editor

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