

Lancaster Farming

OPINION

Large-Scale Agriculture Opponents

For some time, radical environmentalists have been actively working against owner/managers — and proposed owner/managers — of large-scale, family owned, confinement operations.

These opponents of high-production agriculture seek out any legal means necessary to stop large-scale operations from appearing on the farm landscape. Yet time and again, it has been proven that these large-scale operations — which critics have been calling (unfortunately) “factory farms” — are necessary if family farms are going to prosper.

These opponents blame large-scale operations for the demise of the Chesapeake Bay. In the past decade, radical environmentalists, working closely with township managers, have pushed enough laws through to “tie the hands” of owners of the large-scale operations.

Farmers have always been the “first environmentalists,” because of their own belief in land stewardship. It’s the radical (mostly uninformed) environmentalists that concern us the most.

People who sign restrictive laws into place obviously don’t worry very much about how much household income is spent on food. Or maybe it’s even more simple than that — perhaps they believe food doesn’t come from a farm but from the mini-mart or the chain grocery store down the road.

The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay notes in their newspaper, the Bay Journal, for April that EPA’s Office of Water is looking at draft rules that “could result in major changes in the way animal waste is managed in the Bay states and elsewhere in the watershed.”

EPA is looking at hundreds of pages of proposed rules, noted the Journal. These rules would regulate and create a permitting process for the concentrated animal feeding operations, also known as CAFOs.

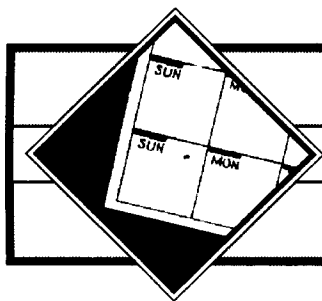
More regulations and “hand-tying” are not what producers need.

But more insidious activity has already been taking place in several townships and boroughs across the state. Several ordinances have been “rewritten” by board members, using templated legal documents, by many who don’t appreciate or understand agriculture, to prevent large-scale animal operations from starting up.

They do so because of protests from a loud minority who simply don’t understand or care about the necessity for large-scale animal enterprises. Even though the days of the Old MacDonald farm with two cows and a pig are history (out of sheer economic necessity), radical environmentalists simply don’t care.

What is so dreadfully sad is the astounding lack of knowledge these opponents of large-scale animal agriculture have. They don’t realize the outstanding environmental stewardship programs that these large-scale farms are required to follow. They don’t realize how prominent animal welfare plays in protective confinement — after all, animals lost hits the producers in the wallet.

But the ignorance is the shame of it all, really. It flies in the face of farm viability.



❖ FARM CALENDAR ❖

Saturday, April 21

9th Annual Horse Farms Open House.

Delaware Valley College Livestock Judging Contest, Delaware Valley College, (215) 489-2321.

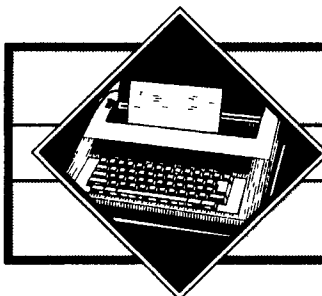
Dairy Exposition and Little International Livestock Exposition, University Park, 6 p.m.,

alumni dinner dance, (814) 863-4198.

Deer in Rural Woodlands, Sullivan extension office, Dushore, 8:30 p.m.

Seminar on Growing Small Fruits, 4-H Center, Creamery, 9 a.m.-noon, (610) 489-4315.

Cecil County Farm Museum Antique Tractor Demonstration
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❖ FARM FORUM ❖

Editor:

I read your story in the April 7 issue quoting surveys from the International Food Information Council. My first reaction was to ask where this organization gets its funds. If it is truly a nonprofit

organization not beholden to industry or consumer groups, why does it take any position on labeling of bioengineered foods? I quote your article, “IFIC is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to communicate

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Now Is The Time
By Leon Ressler
Lancaster County Extension Director

To Prepare For April Frost Protection

With alternating periods of warm, sunny weather and cold, frosty mornings, April is typically a time when fruit growers and gardeners need to be prepared to frost-protect to save flowers, buds, and tender vegetation.

Strawberries usually need frost protection because they typically bloom in April. The crop is very low-growing, where temperatures are usually the lowest.

Strawberry growers should monitor their crop so they can make preparations for frost protection as needed. It is important to remember that buds can be destroyed by cold weather, so just because your crop is not yet blooming does not mean you are not in danger.

It is important to know the critical temperatures for strawberries based on the stage of development. The critical temperature for a tight bud is 22 degrees

Fahrenheit (F), for a popcorn bud it is 26.5 degrees F, for flowers it is 30 degrees F, and for fruit it is 28 degrees F.

A strawberry producer needs to calibrate any temperature-monitoring device to make sure it is accurate. Simple liquid-in-glass thermometers are the least expensive tools for this task and are effective. More expensive electronic systems, which measure temperatures at remote locations, are also available from scientific instrument companies.

Whatever temperature-sensing equipment you choose must be calibrated to ensure accuracy. This can be done by submerging the sensor or thermometer bulb in a container filled with crushed ice and water. This mixture should be stirred and there should be more ice than water. After 30 minutes, read the device. It should read within 1 degree of 32 degrees F. Adjust the instrument as necessary.

Buds, blossoms, and berries can be protected by frost protection with overhead irrigation. This works because as water freezes, heat is released by the freezing process. As long as the bud, blossom, or berry is covered by a layer of freezing water, the temperature will remain at or near freezing.

The amount of water needed to get adequate frost protection will depend on the air temperature, humidity, and wind speed. Generally the lower the air temperature and dew point and/or the higher the wind speed, the greater the rate of freezing. This will then require a higher rate of water application to get adequate protection.

At a wind speed of 2-4 mph, a relative humidity of 50 percent, and a temperature of 24 degrees F, 0.30 inches of water per hour must be applied. To determine

what you need to apply under your conditions, consult charts available from your irrigation supplier or in the “Penn State Commercial Berry Production Pest Management Guide.” The guide is available for \$10 at your county cooperative extension office.

To Comment On Federal Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) Regulations

At the end of March, Environmental Protection Administration (EPA) Administrator Christie Whitman announced an extension of the public comment period on proposed regulations designed to reduce water pollution from large animal feedlot operations. The comment period was extended through July 30.

EPA proposed new water pollution permitting controls in January that would apply to large concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). CAFOs are defined as having 1,000 cattle or comparable “animal units” of other livestock.

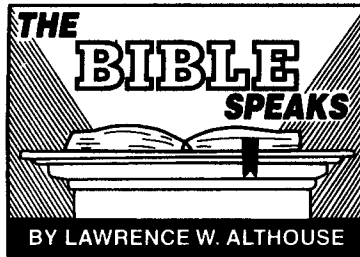
Eight public meetings were conducted by EPA across the country in March to provide information and receive public comment on the proposal. EPA is providing the additional public comment opportunity based on comments received at these meetings, asking for more time to study and comment on the proposed Clean Water Act permitting requirements and CAFO definitions.

For more information, visit EPA’s Website at <http://www.epa.gov/owm/afo.htm> or contact your county extension office.

Quote of The Week:

“No man is justified in doing evil on the ground of expediency.”

— Theodore Roosevelt



THE BIBLE SPEAKS
BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE

WHAT HAS GOD SHOWN YOU?

Background Scripture: Acts 10:1 through 11:18.

Devotional Reading: Galatians 3:11-14.

It is an old story: we encounter God. Then we think about the encounter and try to put it in some kind of mental concept. Next, we devise ways and means of perpetuating the experience or at least its meaning to us. From earliest times of human existence this is how people have theologized, ritualized, and attempted to organize spiritual phenomena.

There is nothing wrong in this — in fact, God has designed us to do just this — so long as we remember that the theologies, rituals, and ecclesiastical structures are not the “treasure” but the “earthen vessels” of which Paul is writing, when he says: “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us” (1 Cor. 4:7).

The divine “treasure” is the encounter with God, while our even our most inspired and creative attempts to understand, duplicate, and capture it are but human means. Too often we cling to the “earthen vessels” and let them become a substitute for the “treasure.”

We need to keep this in mind

when we approach the story of Peter’s dream and his summons to the home of Cornelius, the Roman centurion. When on the housetop Peter begins to dream and hears a voice telling him to satisfy his hunger by selecting something to eat from among the creatures in a great sheet lowered from the heavens, we can understand and appreciate Peter’s response: “No, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean” (10:14). Peter’s response was not one of prejudice or religious pride per se, but his attempt to remain true to the Jewish dietary laws which were an expression of his covenant with God.

What God Has Cleansed

The dietary laws were not inherently evil, but they could become and often were a barrier to hearing God’s truth that pushes us beyond our creeds, rituals, and regulations. “What God has cleansed, you must not call common,” said the voice from heaven — three times, the author of Acts assures us. We can understand why Peter was troubled by this dream: “Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision he had seen might mean, behold, the men that were sent by Cornelius . . . stood before the gate . . .” (v. 17).

We must also try to understand what a challenge these men presented to Peter. They were Gentiles and Peter’s faith forbade him to associate with non-Jews.

So, ordinarily, he would have refused to accompany them, but when they told him an angel had directed Cornelius to send for him, Peter found he had to lay aside the earthen vessel of his religion and respond to the inter-

vention of God. When he arrived at Cornelius’s he demonstrated that he at last understood the meaning of his rooftop experience: “God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (10:28).

No Partiality

The light of God’s “treasure” was able to break through the wall of “earthen vessels” — “Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him” (vs. 34,35).

While Peter was preaching to the people, God gave him a sign that he had understood rightly: “And the believers from among the circumcised who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles” (v. 45).

Good for Peter, we may want to say. But this story is not just about Peter, but us as well. Knowing myself and other disciples of Jesus Christ as I do, I can hardly believe that you, my readers, are not clinging to at least a few “earthen vessels” that keep you from realizing the “treasure” God wants to give us. The question is not “what did God show Peter?” but what is God trying to show us?

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