

Lancaster Farming

OPINION

Our Precious Resource

Clean and plentiful quantities of water are sorely taken for granted. That's the message delivered last week at a Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) seminar conducted in Carlisle.

Lawrence C. Tropea Jr., DEP deputy secretary for water management, and Robert M. Ross, Pennsylvania-American Water Company, both provide their views in the "Water Is Life" booklet published by DEP and handed out to more than 200 water industry representatives at the symposium.

According to Ross, 88 percent of Pennsylvanians obtain their drinking water from public water systems. Those systems serve water to approximately 8.9 million people from surface water sources (rivers, lakes, and reservoirs).

The rest of the water used by public water systems and by private residential users is obtained from groundwater sources such as wells and springs.

More than one million wells exist in Pennsylvania, *the second highest number in the United States* (emphasis ours).

But the state's population grows. The water resources, however, remain the same. What kind of problems will this create in the future? What can be done to conserve and protect this precious resource?

Back in 1992, the editor of this paper examined the burgeoning projects in the state to protect well water. The series, which won second place in the Keystone Press Awards competition, examined farmers' difficulties with water quality and what they had to do.

Those who spoke at the symposium noted that federally funded programs exist to ensure we protect this precious resource. Fantastic technology exists to study the makeup of an aquifer, to monitor the actual age of the water in an aquifer, look at how water moves below the ground, and what affect the ground below us has on the effect of water movement. Technicians can even date the actual age of a water source!

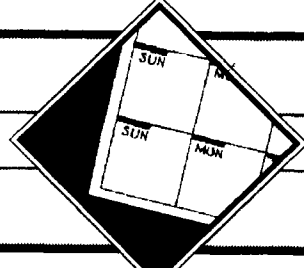
One municipality, Telford, Borough in Montgomery and Bucks counties, has a wellhead protection plan in place. The borough also monitors wells for long-range water quality observations.

Yet only about 10 percent of statewide water systems have some sort of wellhead protect plan or program, according to those who spoke at the symposium.

According to David Hess, acting secretary for the DEP, Pennsylvanians drill more than 10,000 new water wells every year. Wells serve more than 2.5 million people.

With that much of an area to cover, and that many people who depend on quality water, township and borough supervisors would do well to work on water quality.

For more information, contact DEP at (717) 772-4048 or through the Web at www.dep.state.pa.us



❖ FARM CALENDAR ❖

Saturday, May 12


8 a.m. Open Horse Show, Tioga Park, Nichols, N.Y., 9 a.m.

Western Pennsylvania All-Breeds Sheep and Lamb Sale, Mercer 4-H Park, 5 p.m.

Westmoreland County Penn State Master Gardeners' Plant Sale, Donohoe Center,

Beaver-Lawrence Farm Bureau Golf Tournament, Stone Crest Golf Course, Wampum,

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❖ FARM FORUM ❖

Editor:

According to your editorial on April 21, you approve of a large CAFO (concentrated animal feeding operation). Most people, including myself, accept a few large buildings, but as the size increases, so do our complaints.

Although all agriculture can be described as an industry, these buildings are more like typical industry because feed is brought in and a product is made and shipped out, including the manure. The topsoil is not needed and can be removed

from the farm, except on a preserved farm. Also, unless zoning or a deed restriction stops a plan, a large CAFO will most likely be built on a farm's flatter Class I and II prime farmland.

The goal of farmland preservation is to prohibit or limit industrial buildings and other developments on this land.

The other complaints can be with truck traffic, odors, mice, flies, water use, and stream pollution if something breaks. But the complaints that don't receive media attention are that

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Now Is The Time

By Leon Ressler

Lancaster County
Extension Director

To Protect Groundwater While Applying Pesticides

Corn planting is nearly complete on many Pennsylvania farms. This means that a large percentage of the pesticides that will be applied this year will be used in the next two weeks as farmers apply their corn herbicides.

Protecting our farms' groundwater supplies from contamination while applying pesticides should be a high priority.

Following a few common-sense guidelines when using pesticides will go a long way toward achieving that goal.

First, never fill your sprayer near a well. Choose the water faucet located the farthest from the well for your water supply. If that is not practical, purchase enough hose to be able to fill your sprayer at a safe distance from your well.

Avoid spills when mixing and move the location where you are

mixing periodically. When cleaning the sprayer, rinse it at least three times and spray the rinse water on the field where the product was used. Triple-rinse empty spray containers and add the rinse water to the spray tank. After properly rinsing the containers, punch holes in them and dispose of them at approved disposal sites. Always read and follow label directions when using pesticides.

To Apply Fungicides To Strawberries

The recent warm weather has promoted rapid development of numerous perennial crops. Many strawberry varieties are now in bloom and this is the time when Botrytis fruit rot (gray mold) should be controlled.

Gray mold or Botrytis blight causes the greatest loss of flowers and fruit of all the strawberry diseases. The Botrytis infection starts in the bloom period. If conditions favor development of the disease as the fruit develops, the disease will then invade the berries, causing them to rot. The rot may first appear at the base of the cap or when the berry is in contact with the soil, other rotten fruit, or damp surfaces.

As ripening increases and if humidity remains high, a gray, fuzzy coating produced by the fruiting of the fungus often covers the strawberry. As the disease develops, spores are produced and are easily spread to healthy foliage by wind or splashing rain. Once the fungus becomes established it can continue to produce spores throughout the growing season. The fungus thrives on plant debris, so sanitation is essential for control.

Moisture is necessary for the gray mold spores to germinate and infect plants, so the disease

is favored by cool humid conditions. Practices that help reduce humidity and increase air movement, such as wider spacing between rows and plants, can help control gray mold. Since free water is required for spore germination, managing overhead irrigation to minimize the time period that the berries are wet is very important. If one irrigates during midday (10 a.m. to 2 p.m.), the fruit will dry quickly in the sun after the water is turned off. This will reduce the opportunity for mold spores to germinate and infect the fruit.

Since most gray mold infections occur during the bloom period, fungicide applications should be focused on this period as well. The amount of protection needed will be heavily influenced by the amount of rainfall. Research has shown one to three applications during the bloom period usually provide excellent control. If these applications are made during the bloom period, additional treatments later usually do not provide additional control. If the blossom sprays are missed, later applications usually do not provide adequate control.


The number of fungicides labeled for use in strawberries is limited. Products that are labeled include Elevate, Captain, Thiram, and Topsin M. It is important to manage fungicide resistance by alternating unrelated fungicides or by using mixtures of fungicides. Always read and follow label instructions, especially the "days-to-harvest" limitation.

Quote Of the Week:

"Ability may get you to the top, but it takes character to keep you there."

— John Wooden (UCLA Basketball coach with a record 10 NCAA championships)

THE BIBLE SPEAKS



BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE

WHAT IS 'NECESSARY'?

Background Scripture:
Acts 15:1-35.

Devotional Reading:
Romans 3:21-26.

The Church had barely begun when that question of questions reared its head for the first time: "What is necessary to follow Jesus Christ?" That his followers have rarely, if ever, agreed upon this is most apparent from the history of the Church, even in the earliest New Testament times.

No sooner had Paul and Barnabas returned from their first missionary journey and exulted in "all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles" then "some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved'" (Acts 15:1). Did it not matter to them that God had opened Gentile doors, that the Holy Spirit had lead Paul and Barnabas forth, nor that the number of those who wanted to follow Jesus had been increased?

If these men from Judea had

come saying, *We rejoice with you in becoming a follower of The Way, but we think you ought also to be circumcised*, their intervention might be more easily tolerated. But, regardless of how sincere they may have been, there is no humility in them, but outrageous arrogance that denies Peter's rooftop experience: "What God has cleansed, you must not call common" (Acts 10:15).

Defenders Of The Faith?

I'm sure these men were sincere and thought of themselves as defenders of the faith, but they were nonetheless substituting their judgment for the Lord's. Peter correctly admonished them: "Now therefore why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples . . . ?" (15:10). They are not defenders of the faith, but rebels against God!

The Jerusalem Church resolved this question of "What is necessary?" — at least temporarily — by instructing Antioch Christians that "it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:" (1) abstaining from food sacrificed to idols; (2) from blood and stronghold animals; and (3) unchastity. This was a compromise: Gentiles would be accepted (a big victory for the liberal church at Antioch) so long as they refrained from unchastity and food sacrificed to idols (a smaller victory for the conservatives in Jerusalem).

'Good To The Holy Spirit?'

Yet, although we admire this

compromise, there is one idea in it that lies as the ground for most conflicts among Christians: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us . . ." (15:25). If the Jerusalem Church meant, as we interpreted the guidance of the Holy Spirit . . . , there is room for those who do not so interpret the Holy Spirit. It is more likely, however, that the Jerusalem Church meant that the Holy Spirit gave them the specific stipulations for their decree. And that is the tragedy of Christian history: so many people believing that, when they have spoken, it is the voice of the Holy Spirit.

What is necessary, then? I can give you my personal answer and I can attribute that answer to the Holy Spirit, but I must not, will not, assume what is the prerogative of the Lord. I do not believe I am called — nor any of us — to defend the faith, but to live it. Instead of deciding for others "what is necessary," it is enough for me to find the answers to that question while I seek day by day to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. If I do that, I will be "defending the faith" in the same way Jesus did.

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—by—

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