

Lancaster Farming

OPINION

CAFO Issues And Farmers' Faith

In the May 2001 "Penn State Dairy Digest," Robert Graves, of agricultural, biological, and engineering extension, speaks about how the proposed Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) regulations will impact most state dairy farms within the next five years.

His article, "This CAFO Stuff Is Serious," brings home two major issues: the existing state CAFO regulations that could apply to a farm with 180 mature cows and associated replacements and proposed revisions that could directly impact farms with 200 milking cows, 300 heifers, or 300 veal calves.

These regulations can't be avoided — we can't just think it happens only to the "big guys," noted Graves.

The existing state rules indicate that all farms with more than 1,000 AEU (or Animal Equivalent Units, and an AEU equals 1,000 pounds of body weight) are required to have a state CAFO permit. Farms with more than 300 AEU (approximately 180 cows with replacements) are required to have a permit if they are a CAO (or "concentrated animal operation" under the Nutrient Management Act). A farm in the 300 AEU+ category in a special protection watershed is required to have a permit.

If you live in one of those watersheds, do you know whether it is High Quality or Exception Value watershed? How do you find out? Where do you go for help?

Graves makes it clear about expansion. If you are near or more than the 180-milking-cows level, find out what your status is. "It is your responsibility to know if these regulations apply to you," Graves noted. "The fines for noncompliance are real and can be large."

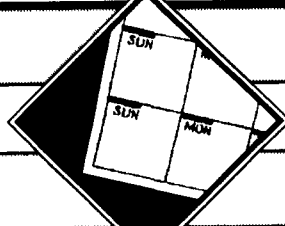
What is particularly scary: "You may also be vulnerable to citizen-initiated lawsuits under provisions of the Clean Water Act," noted Graves (emphasis ours).

It's awfully difficult for some to make a living at farming, and these regulations don't help. The sad fact is, how many regulations can the farmer take before he simply throws up his hands and says, "who cares?"

Either these processes have to be simplified to the point where they have real meaning on a large scale, or so many farmers will simply "lose the faith," as it were, and become so alienated that the rules could defy the very purpose for which they're written: to protect our precious resources.

We need more discussion. The guides and outlines for conservation of soil, decades ago, were solid, made sense, and are enforceable. There were few ways to exploit technical loopholes.


For the rulemakers: *Don't destroy farmers' faith in rule making and the importance of protecting our resources.* Make their concerns count for all regulations. And allow them to keep the faith in your law-making abilities.



❖ FARM CALENDAR ❖

Saturday, August 18
 Central Regional Championship Show, Huntingdon County Fairgrounds, Huntingdon, 6 p.m.
 Crawford County Fair, thru Aug. 25.
 Botany Summer Short Course: Residential Landscape Design, Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, 9

a.m.-5:30 p.m.
 Warren County Summer Holstein Sale, Warren County Fairgrounds, Pittsfield, 11 a.m.
 Central Pa. Championship Holstein Show, Huntingdon County Fairgrounds, Huntingdon, 6 p.m.
 Ohio Farm Profitability Tour, (Turn to Page A11)



❖ FARM FORUM ❖

Editor:
 I have sent copies of an original mailing I received addressing a major issue facing the pork-producing family farms, asking for your support by publishing an article that heightens the awareness of the status of the pork "checkoff" issue to your readers.

Similar to other industries, the "checkoff" was initiated in

1986 to promote pork and increase producers' profitability. After 12 years, "anti-tax activists" claim the tax primarily benefited "larger producers." Therefore, Ag Secretary Glickman called for a national referendum to decide if pork producers wanted the "checkoff."

According to the vote, the tax (Turn to Page A29)



**Now Is
The Time**
 By Leon Ressler
*Lancaster County
Extension Director*

To Be Aware Of Potential Problems With Drought-Stressed Forages

Recent rains have brought some relief to the drought-stressed areas of the state. However, for many it is too late to recover and now the challenge is to use the drought-stressed forage without causing problems with high nitrate levels in the rations.

In addition to drought, high soil levels of nitrogen from heavy manure use contribute to the risk of high nitrate levels in forage crops in many parts of Pennsylvania.

The first step to avoiding problems with drought stressed corn is to avoid harvest for the first few days after a drought-ending rain. Nitrate levels are the highest for the first 3-7 days after

such a rain. The second step to reduce the risk of nitrate problems in your feed is to ensile the entire crop. The ensiling process reduces about half of the nitrates in the crop to ammonia, which can be utilized by the rumen bacteria. Avoid the temptation to feed some of the drought-stressed crop as greenchop even if your feed supplies are tight.

A nitrate test on the silage should be conducted if you suspect you may have high nitrate levels. If nitrate levels exceed 0.45-0.75 percent nitrate ion (NO₃) or 0.10-0.17 percent nitrate nitrogen (NO₃-N) on a dry matter basis, test other forages in the ration as well, including legume hay and haylage. Under drought stress the nitrate levels in these crops can be elevated as well.

Reasonably high nitrate forage may still be fed in limited amounts if the level of nitrate in the total ration dry matter (forage plus concentrate) is not over 0.40 percent NO₃- or 0.09 percent NO₃-N. When calculating the total nitrate intake, include the contribution from water if the water contains more than 44 ppm NO₃ or 10 ppm NO₃-N. Suspect forages or those known to contain high nitrate levels should be introduced slowly into the diet. Another strategy to avoid problems is to dilute problem forages with other stored feed.

To Walk Your Corn Fields To Assess Yield Potential

Some fields of drought-stricken corn still have the potential to have a reasonable yield while others have already suffered too much damage. It is important to determine the situation in your

fields while you still have time to seek alternative markets for the crop as forage.

Since feed supplies have been reduced by the drought, the demand for purchased silage will be greater than in other seasons with better growing conditions.

Make sure you walk into the fields to see what the situation is in the middle of the fields. A windshield survey along the field edges leaves you vulnerable to discovering after it is too late that you should have harvested the field for silage. If you move quickly, you still have time to seek alternative markets for your crop if needed.

To Plant A Fall Garden

Planting your garden is a common rite of spring for most families, but there are many things you can grow in the fall to provide some homegrown nutrition as well.

According to Pete Ferretti, extension vegetable specialist, some varieties of collards, endive, escarole, kale, spinach, and cauliflower do very well in cooler weather.


"With the very hardy ones, a lot of times you could have it for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years, and those are the most fun times."

In order to avoid disease and insect problems, Ferretti advises that you should avoid planting in the same area where a variety grew earlier in the season. For more information on varieties, consult the "Pennsylvania Vegetable Variety Guide," available from your Penn State Cooperative Extension county office.

Quote of the Week:
"I will prepare and someday my chance will come."

— Abraham Lincoln

**THE
BIBLE
SPEAKS**



BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE

NO MATTER WHAT YOU CALL IT

Background Scripture:
 Isaiah 5.
Devotional Reading:
 Mark 12:1-9.

Many years ago we visited Naples, Italy. Seeing that we were about to go outside and walk around the city streets, the hotel manager felt it imperative that he warn us about the driving habits of Neapolitan drivers. "You must understand," he said forcefully, "in Naples, green does not necessarily mean green and red does not necessarily mean red." It didn't take us long to observe for ourselves that local drivers were largely unresponsive to the usual understanding of traffic lights.

When green no longer means green and red no longer signifies red, walking or driving the streets of such a city is especially nerve-racking and dangerous. In fact, when the meanings of familiar words are changed, it can be very stressful to us and dangerous to human relationships. Politicians, entrepreneurs and advertisers who say one thing and mean another contribute to a general sense of cynicism and distrust. Nowhere is this more of a con-

cern than with the various terms which we use for "good" and "evil."

The moral tone of a society is greatly compromised when we get to that point where we hold still for people who, as Isaiah put it, "call evil good and good evil" (Is. 5:20). When this distinction is blurred, the moral fiber of a society crumbles.

Wild Grapes!

This song with which Isaiah begins is a touching analogy of God's relationship with the people of Israel. Comparing his election of Israel to the planting of a vineyard, the Lord tells of all that he had done to make it a fruitful endeavor.

Like a hard-working farm laborer, God had figuratively "dugged it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines" (5:2). He did all this in expectation of the vine's fruitfulness. Yes, "he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes."

Many of Isaiah's contemporaries probably could not understand him. They saw themselves as faithful worshippers of God, paying their tithes, making their sacrifices, and attending the holy days. They probably assumed that their lives were "good" in God's sight.

But they were so used to calling "evil good and good evil," that they no longer could distinguish between the two.

So what does that have to do with us today? Do you really need help to make the connection? Do you not see that same blasphemy in our own society, calling evil good and good evil — and living accordingly? Like the people of Judah and Israel, are we not his "pleasant planting?" Might he not say equally of us,

"What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" (5:4)

What God Looks For

Once again it is a matter of people not realizing — or not wanting to — what it is that God wants from us. "He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold a cry!" (5:7).

(This is a play on words, for the Hebrew for "justice," mishap, is close to the word for "bloodshed," mishag; while "righteousness," cedhagah, is close to "a cry," ceaqaq.) Isaiah makes it crystal clear that greed and avariciousness are "evil." "Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no more room" (5:8).

Riotous, imperate living, arrogant, and conceit, insobriety, and those who "acquit the guilty for a bribe and deprive the innocent of his right!" No matter what they may call it, this kind of living is evil, not the good life.

The result of calling evil good and good evil and living accordingly? The judgment of God and a terrible calamity will fall upon. "And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard, I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down" (5:11).

Twenty-five-hundred-plus years ago that message came as a shock to the people of Israel and Judah. It should be no less discomforting for us today.

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