

# Lancaster Farming

## OPINION

### If Wishing Could Make It So

If I had a wish list for Santa this holiday season, it wouldn't necessarily contain such large-scale requests as an end to this persistent drought or the cease-fire of the Afghan War, though it would be nice.

I would make it simple. It would be for some other items that farmers would certainly like to see.

Thanks to the promises of genetic engineering, I can think of several things I wouldn't mind seeing developed by science and industry, handed over to Santa, and passed down the chimney for all of us to enjoy. Maybe the promises of biotech will pay off, perhaps handsomely, in years to come.

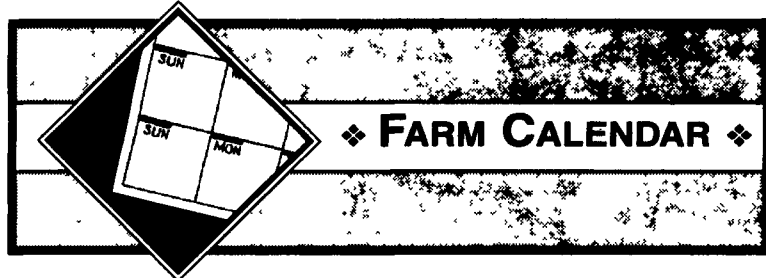
But these three things come to mind almost immediately:

- For a crop that is as tolerant as The Weed. By The Weed, I refer to the year 1999, one of the hottest and longest summers, and most certainly the driest summer in Pennsylvania on record. The Weed was a simple dandelion, growing out of an asphalt crack on Rt. 272 in Akron, despite months of little or no rain, very little sunshine, and no fertilizer. The Weed was as thriving as can be. Scientists have to find a way to translate this brash summer hardy yield-robbing crop's genetics into corn and soybeans. Farmers would, then, have little or nothing to worry about come a drought (or wet) year or other horrific growing conditions.

- The Butterball (no relationship to any trademarked poultry product). This is a term to mean a genetically "created" meat animal coined by futurist writer Mike Resnick. This high-protein, lowfat animal reproduces quickly, has an extraordinarily high feed conversion capability, has little or no waste product, and needs little water or air. All parts can easily be consumed or converted to use.

- Though this hasn't anything to do with biotech, I'm waiting for some Silicon Valley electronic engineer ace to create the "transcriber," a device that could take a voice recording and print out pages. It can recognize English, no matter what the accent, and provide printouts. As a journalist, the benefits of a device such as this voice-recognition/transcription technology would be enormous, and journalists would certainly purchase it.

Those things, Santa, would do us a whole wide world of good.



### FARM CALENDAR

Saturday, December 8

Christmas On the Farm, Pa. German Heritage Center, Kutztown University, noon-4:30 p.m.

Sunday, December 9

Monday, December 10

Using a PC For Farm Record-Keeping, Huntingdon County Cooperative Extension, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m. and Dec. 11, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m., (814) 865-4700.

"Passing on the Farm Workshop," Reliance Hose Co., Middleburg, 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m., (717) 664-7077.

Tuesday, December 11

Vegetable and Berry Conference

and Trade Show, Sturbridge Mass. Host Hotel, (413) 545-5216.

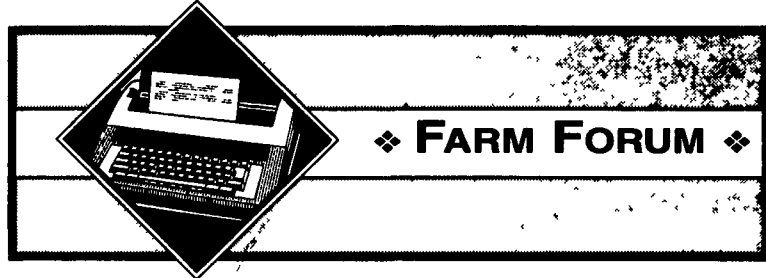
DHIA Data Workshop, York County Extension Office, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m., (717) 840-7408.

"The Human-Equine Bond," Equine Medical Center, first of three Tuesday Talks, Leesburg, Va., 7 p.m. in the library. Others Jan. 15, Feb. 12, and March 12.

DEP Workshop, Greater Plymouth Community Center, Plymouth Meeting, and Ramada Plaza Hotel, Wilkes-Barre, 1 p.m. and 6 p.m.

LanChester Pork Council Pro-

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### FARM FORUM

Editor:

The Farm Bill that will be reported by the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee will contain some favorable provisions for all area dairy farmers.

Certainly, we would have favored a dairy bill that set milk prices based on the average cost of producing milk. However, the dairy provisions of the Farm Bill will allow higher prices to be paid to dairy farmers.

At the same time, the bill will stabilize prices paid to dairy farmers. Much of the credit for the dairy provisions in the Farm

Bill should go to Sen. Pat Leahy from Vermont. A similar dairy provision introduced in the House by Rep. Bernie Sanders from Vermont lost by only 27 votes.

Some of the early opposition to the dairy provisions by some organizations tells me the bill must be very good.

The bill will help all dairy farmers.

The Farm Bill, if passed as it comes out of the committee, will establish a floor price for Class I milk (bottled milk). My understanding is that federal order #1,

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### Now Is The Time

By Leon Ressler  
Lancaster County Extension Director

#### To Be Aware Of Grain Inventories

As you prepare to buy grain for your feeding needs or sell grain if you are a producer, it is important to understand grain inventories.

H. Louis Moore, professor of agricultural economics at Penn State, prepared the following update.

The Nov. 9 Crop Report revised the size of the U.S. corn crop up 1 percent from October to 9.55 billion bushels. While the crop size is down 4 percent from a year ago, it will be the sixth consecutive crop exceeding 9 billion bushels.

The first time the U.S. ever produced a crop greater than 9 billion bushels was in 1992. To follow up with so many crops exceeding 9 billion bushels is very unusual. If the final crop, after harvest, is 9.55 billion bushels, it will be the fourth largest crop on record and the second highest yield, averaging 138 bushels nationally.

Pennsylvania was severely hurt by drought again and the corn crop is expected to be 97.7 million bushels, down about 40 million bushels from last year. The Pennsylvania yield per acre is expected to be 94 bushels compared to 127 bushels a year ago.

Less corn was planted and harvested nationally in 2001 because corn prices have been depressed and the government program for soybeans has been much more attractive to producers. Producers harvested about 3.5 million fewer corn acres than a year ago.

Soybean acreage in 2001 increased nearly 2 million from a year ago, and the yield per acre at 39.4 bushels is up about 1.3 bushels from a year ago. This will yield a new all-time record soybean harvest at 2.92 billion bushels. The crop will be about 6 percent larger than the 2000 crop. In Pennsylvania, the soybean harvest will be about 15.7 million bushels, down 800,000 bushels from last year despite an increase of 40,000 acres harvested.

Before Sept. 11, the corn market was projected to be higher this fall and winter. This projection was based on a somewhat lower carryover of grain and an export market about as strong as a year ago. The domestic use of corn as livestock feed use was forecast to increase even more.

All bets are off since the Sept. 11 events. The beef market and dairy markets have seen lower prices and exports are really uncertain. It is almost certain, too, that we are in a recession. The only question unanswered is: how long will the recession last? At this point it is important to collect the maximum amount from the government program and to check the benefits of your crop insurance program.

The impact of the record harvest will keep soybean prices relatively low. Because of the ripple effects of the growing world recession, it will be difficult to increase exports and domestic use of soybeans.

#### To Monitor Groundwater Levels in Your Area

Groundwater levels naturally fluctuate over the course of a year, affecting the performance of your well. Groundwater levels tend to be highest during March and April following winter snow melt and spring rains.

During the growing season, groundwater recharge is very limited since trees and other plants use most of the available water to grow. Typically groundwater levels are at their lowest level for the year in September and October before being replenished by fall and winter rains. This year we have yet to see any significant fall recharge, so we are in a very serious water supply situation.

Bryan Swistock, extension associate in the forest resources department, advises that direct determination of the groundwater level in your well is difficult and usually requires the use of a water level meter. These meters are comprised of an electrical probe attached to the end of a measuring tape. The probe is lowered into the well until a display or light indicates that it has reached

water. The depth to water is then read directly from the measuring tape. These instruments generally cost \$300 or more depending on the anticipated length of tape needed.

Swistock also suggests there are other, less direct, but more practical methods to determine the status of your well water supply. In recent years, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has developed a Web-based system to access water levels from a group of monitoring wells in Pennsylvania.

The USGS measures 67 wells in nearly every county of the state. They have developed a Webpage that allows viewers to access water levels over the past two years from 40 of these wells. In addition to the actual water level, different shaded areas are provided to illustrate the normal conditions as well as drought watch, warning, and emergency water levels. This information, although not specific to your well, will allow you to observe the general trend in groundwater levels in your area. The Webpage for this system is <http://pa.water.usgs.gov/durplots/well-duration.html>.

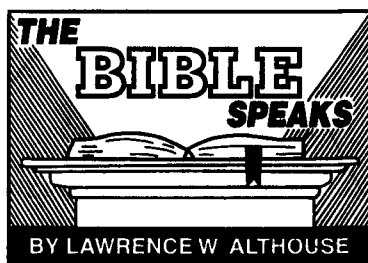
Once you access this page, choose the well nearest to your house and select the "30-day graph" to view the up-to-date groundwater conditions in your area. The graphs are color coded to easily show when a particular well is experiencing drought conditions and the severity of the conditions. You can also view up-to-date groundwater levels and other information for all 67 monitoring wells, including the water levels over the past seven days, at the following USGS Website: <http://water.usgs.gov/pa/nwis/current?type=gw>.

You may also be able to learn more about your local groundwater conditions by contacting local well drillers and neighbors. Well drillers are continually drilling new wells and, therefore, may have knowledge of groundwater levels near your well. They may also have installed new submersible pumps in nearby wells that would allow them to document the existing groundwater level. Similar discussions with neighbors that have had new pumps installed or had new wells drilled may provide valuable information about the groundwater level.

Quote Of The Week:

*"I hope I shall always possess firmness and virtue enough to maintain what I consider the most enviable of all titles, the character of an honest man."*

— George Washington



### PIE-IN-THE-SKY

Background Scripture: Isaiah 11:1-9.  
Devotional Reading: Isaiah 12.

In today's paper was a startling photograph of a Claremore, Okla. man smuggling with Toshi, a full-grown white Bengal tiger, recovering from surgery for a serious aortic condition. We are told that one does not hug a well tiger, let alone a sick one, but the picture shows a rather cozy twosome.

I recalled a fascinating nonfiction book, "The Man Who Listens to Horses" by Monty Roberts (Random House). Raised to believe the conventional wisdom that, before you can train a horse, you must first break his spirit and dominate him, Monty Roberts has discovered that it is far preferable and more effective to "listen" to the horse through his or her body language. He has been so successful in dealing with "problem horses" that he frequently is called to England to work with the horses of Queen Elizabeth II.

The prejudice against which Monty Roberts has worked throughout most of his life is one that seems to permeate human minds when it

comes to our relations with the world in which God has placed us. Too often we have attempted to assert our dominance over God's creation and creatures. God has called us to be good stewards of his creation, not dominate it. Similarly, many parents believe that the only way to raise their children is to break their wills and dominate them.

#### Peaceful Coexistence

Isaiah, however, tells of a future in which "the wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and calf and the lion and the fatling together..." (11:6). Through the symbolism of the peaceful coexistence of a variety of wild creatures, he foresees a day when former enemies will live in peace — Christians living peacefully with Moslems, Irish Catholics with Protestants, Israelis and Palestinians dwelling side by side or even Democrats and Republicans "burying the hatchet" and not in each other.

Isaiah looked for a Davidic descendant to reign over Israel and restore the nation. Some scholars believe he used these words when he anointed Hezekiah to be King of Israel. This "anointed one" would embody all the Davidic ideals. In fact, he expected what most of us look for in a leader: "And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord."

Led By A Little Child

It is impossible for us to read this passage without identifying the one who shall come as Jesus Christ. As a matter of faith, we believe that he was the one who perfectly fulfilled this expectation.

When Isaiah says, "and a little child shall lead them," we cannot help but see the infant Jesus lying in a manger and in his helplessness defying the ways of the world that delay, but do not ultimately defeat God's plan and purpose for this world.

That is a vision of a future that lies far beyond us, but occasionally we catch a glimpse of what we and the world were created to become. God's peaceable kingdom may lie beyond our own immediate grasp, but it is in the very direction that he bids us to grow. We may not personally see the lion lie down with the lamb, but shall we not yearn and strive to incarnate the one who "shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth." With the help of God, this ideal does not lie beyond the realm of human possibility. When we begin to embody and live the ideals of Christ, then "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

"Pie-in-the-sky?" No — not if we let the Messiah of God rule our hearts, homes, and nation.

### Lancaster Farming

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—by—

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