

Lancaster Farming

OPINION

Maybe It Is Time

To the surprise of few, southcentral Pennsylvania is once again experiencing a drought situation. With Pennsylvania recording drought conditions in four of the last six years, maybe it is time to look beyond our typical band-aid approach of emergency water conservation such as reducing water consumption in our homes, and turn to more long-term conservation practices.

We are not suggesting that individual water conservation measures are not important. They are! What we are suggesting is that our past and current conservation actions have not been enough, and maybe it is time to tackle the tough and controversial issues of how we use our land and abuse our water resources.

There are those individuals who would argue that we are going through a natural cycle concerning the frequency of our droughts and that, soon enough, all will be well. This may very well be a natural cycle it may be 10 or 15 years until we have another serious drought. Or, the drought trend could be indicative of a larger problem. However, no matter what the case, a drought is the only time when many people realize the limited aspects of our fresh water and, therefore, it is the best time to decide our actions concerning the future of that water. What we do now will have a serious impact on the severity of any future droughts.

Many people realize the limited aspect of other natural resources such as oil, but fail to acknowledge the same limitation of our clean, usable freshwater. Our water resources are not unlimited! They are affected every day by development, pollution, and population growth. In 1900, each of the six million people living in Pennsylvania used about five gallons of water per day. Since then, our population has doubled to almost 12 million people and our water consumption has increased to an average of 62 gallons per day.

Part of this 900 percent increase in water use is obviously due to the many modern water-using conveniences in our homes, but nevertheless indicates that we could be in serious trouble, soon! Each year we drill 10,000 new wells in Pennsylvania that are, to a great extent, unregulated. Simple math shows that the severity of our current drought will probably be much worse in 10 to 15 years when we could have as many as 100,000 or 150,000 additional wells drawing water from our underground aquifers.

To further compound the problem, each day we are converting more land to paved parking lots and rooftops (impermeable surfaces), thereby increasing runoff and decreasing natural ground infiltration that would normally help to recharge our groundwater sources.

Maybe it is time:

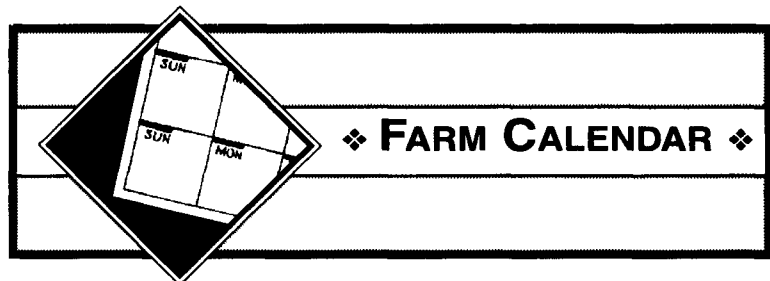
- To seriously consider our surface waters and groundwater as a natural resource with limits.
- To employ best management practices that will help to minimize the adverse impacts of new development by providing more ground infiltration, water quality treatment of stormwater runoff, etc.
- To promote land use decisions that are in the best interest of a watershed and the people that live within it, rather than viewing land planning as what is best for individual municipalities within the watershed.
- To make tough land use decisions that would protect stream valleys, floodplains, and riparian buffers in the interest of all.
- To change our thought processes from viewing key land parcels along streams, in aquifer recharge areas, and in stream valleys for their value as potential tax revenue. Instead we should view them for their value to protect and enhance water quality and quantity.
- To dedicate our efforts to make every citizen realize that we all contribute to our problem and therefore all need to recognize that everyone is an integral part of the solution to water concerns.

It is important to understand that the conservation district is not an agency that is against development and economic growth. We recognize that both must and will occur. However, even economic growth and development depends on a clean and abundant water supply. What we promote as a conservation district is responsible development, growth and land planning, and a recognition of the importance of our surface and ground waters in all of the decisions relating to this growth.

We can and must develop a better way of doing business and making decisions. In 10 or 15 years, or even next year, when the next drought occurs, will we look back and say "We are so glad we took the actions that we did to protect our water resources?" Or, will we be in the middle of another drought emergency with mandatory restrictions as the big solution?

Maybe it is time? No, it is time.

— From Earthtones
The Newsletter of the Dauphin
County Conservation District



❖ FARM CALENDAR ❖

Saturday, January 12

Pa. Holstein Dauphin County Annual meeting, Old Country Buffet, Harrisburg, 11 a.m.
Ohio Eastern Ohio Forest Wildlife Conference, New Philadelphia, Ohio, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., (740) 732-2381.

Sunday, January 13

Monday, January 14
Spanish Course for Dairymen, Lancaster and Gettysburg, Penn State Extension, Jan. 14-April 8, every Monday, (888) 472-0261, ext. 312.
James Patches Growers' Meeting, Schaefferstown Fire Hall, 9:45 a.m. and 6:45 p.m., (717)

949-3860.

Ohio State Extension, USDA program, Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center, Wooster, (330) 264-8722.

Tuesday, January 15

Lime and Fertilizer Conference, Penn State.

Eastern Regional Nursery, Landscape Seminar, Delaware Valley College, Doylestown, (610) 489-4315.
Vegetable Growers' Association Annual Meeting and Trade Show, Atlantic City, thru Jan. 17, (856) 985-4382.

Tuesday Talk, Equine Medical

(Turn to Page A11)



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

To Analyze Milk Production Costs

No one seems to enjoy preparing the records needed to file income tax reports. However, one benefit of this process is it forces us to summarize information about our operation's income and expenses.

Glenn Shirk, extension dairy agent in Lancaster County, points out that while you are doing this work you should take this opportunity to learn as much as possible from these records.

As a business person, it is important to know what your itemized costs of production are. Do you know? It is very simple to calculate. Simply take the itemized list of expenses from your tax return and divide it by the hundredweight of milk shipped last year, which appears on your last milk check stub for the year. Don't forget to include depreciation and make adjustments for pre-paid expenses and changes in accounts receivable and accounts payable. Also, exclude income and expenses related to nondairy related enterprises such as cash cropping, a custom operating business, other animal enterprises, etc.

You may want to lump all crop-related costs together, including the crop share of rent or mortgages,

building and machinery depreciation and repairs, insurance, taxes, etc. If you add this to your purchased feed costs, you'll have a better idea of what your total feed costs are. But remember this also includes the cost of feeding heifers, bulls, etc.

Shirk also suggests you can also split out total replacement costs, including their share of the above feed costs plus their share of the mortgage or rent, taxes, insurance, building repairs, etc. and calculate replacement costs per hundredweight of milk.

You should then answer several other questions. How much less would your cost per hundredweight (or CWT) be if culling could be reduced? What other dairy income do you have other than milk sales? What does this amount to per CWT of milk produced? Could this be increased if you could reduce the number of cull cows sold at depressed prices and sell more cattle at higher prices? Answers to these questions can guide you as you evaluate management changes needed to have a profitable operation in the future.

To Prepare For Insect, Disease Management In Vegetable Transplants

Dr. Tim Elkner, horticultural agent in Lancaster County, recommends that you start your pest management program for your next greenhouse crop now. Pest management for vegetable transplant production is an integrated process and includes sanitation, sound cultural practices, the use of resistant cultivars (where possible), and finally, proper use of the correct pesticide.

Elkner said you should begin the season with a clean, weed-free disinfected greenhouse. This means clearing the growing area of any plant debris, weeds, and any discarded flats or tools. After cleanup, wash and disinfect empty benches, potting areas, storage shelves, tools, and leftover cell packs and flats that you plan to reuse. Your disinfecting solution can contain any of the sanitizing products such as Green-Shield, Physan 20, Triathlon, Zero Tol, or chlorine bleach (10 percent solution). Be sure to follow the manufacturer's directions when using any commercially prepared materials.

If you are using a 1-to-9 bleach solution, remember that it requires a 30-minute soak in order to be effective. Also, while chlorine bleach is an effective sanitizer, please note that

there will be a 50 percent reduction in strength of a chlorine solution after just two hours. Therefore, you should prepare a new solution each time you plan to sanitize. This includes a new solution after lunch if you started working in the morning.

Once you have the growing area and equipment sanitized, be sure to avoid recontamination. Dirty hose nozzles or tools can contaminate potting soil and the general growing area. Be sure that everything brought into the area is clean. The floor or soil in the growing area is a good source of insects and diseases. Do not stand on the benches after they have been cleaned as you can easily move diseases up from the floor on your shoes. Use hooks to keep your hose nozzle off the floor. Ideally, grow your transplants off the floor as well, either on benches or pallets. The floor in your greenhouse should be well drained and cleaned before plants are started there. Some growers have taken to covering the entire floor with black fiber cloth to both prevent weed growth and make cleanup easier after transplant production. Once dry, plant and soil residues are easily swept-up and removed.

Finally, always use disease-free media for transplant production. If using soil, be sure it is pasteurized before you bring it into the growing area. Successful soil pasteurization requires 30 minutes at 180 degrees Fahrenheit. Be sure to frequently sanitize and maintain clean areas where soil is mixed and pots are filled.

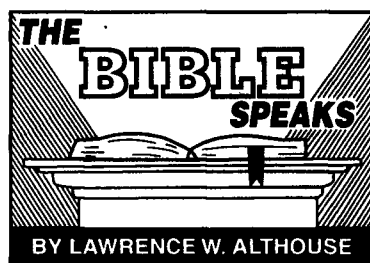
Elkner recommends that you have separate areas if you are producing both vegetable transplants and ornamentals. Bringing cuttings of flowering plants into the vegetable area can introduce pests such as thrips and diseases such as tobacco spotted wilt virus (TSWV). Look at your available space(s) and plan accordingly.

Take some time to prepare your vegetable transplant greenhouse now to reduce disease and insect problems later this season. Waiting until seeding time to start this chore may not leave enough time to do the job thoroughly. This could result in a great deal of time and money spent later to control a disease or insect infestation.

Quote Of The Week:

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."

— Ralph Waldo Emerson



THE EMPTINESS

Background Scripture:
Isaiah 55.

Devotional Reading:
Psalms 85:4-9.

Last evening we went to a party and there was a magnificent buffet. I had some of this and some of that, in total quite a bit more than our normal evening meal. Still, when we got home from the party, I felt strangely unsatisfied. Instead of filling my emptiness, the great abundance of food left me feeling that I was lacking something.

Have you ever experienced something like that? Maybe not with food, but with something that promised to fill a void within you, but didn't? It is well known that many people who overeat are not satisfied with the quantities of food they ingest and it has been suggested that they eat to fill a void that cannot be filled by food. Some people drink to excess for the same reason. More of us, I suspect, try to fill the void with "things."

The exiled Jews in Babylon were probably startled with Isaiah's message: "Ho, every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat" (55:1).

He is talking about the basic necessities of life — water, milk, bread — but the exiled Jews are probably more affluent than they were in Judah. Some scholars believe that it was in Babylon that the Jews learned to be merchants. They had come to Babylon as exiles, but they prospered there.

'Moneytheism'

Still, for all of their success and ease in Babylon, many of them felt a sense of emptiness that the "good life" there could not fill. Isaiah knows this and he goes on to say, "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?"

These words, I believe, are just a relevant for us today. Some of us are "moneytheists" — money and the things money buys frequently take the place of God. Despite what we may profess on Sundays, it is that to which we look for our help, salvation, and fullness that constitutes the object of our true faith.

Our society is fascinated today with the gospel of "consumerism." Instead of the Kingdom of God, the "smart money" today is on a "global market." Does not Isaiah also speak to our complacency?

God's call is one of grace. It is offered to those who have "no money." The true essentials of life are offered "without money and without price." That which we can never earn from God, he gives us as a gift. All that is required is an awareness that the "emptiness" we experience can be filled only by his grace and a willingness to accept that gift.

That is the irony, isn't it? We try to buy things to fill the void that only the free gift from God can fill. This is the "God-shaped blank" that H.G. Wells said is in every person's heart.

Sins Of 'Good Men'

The good news of restoration which Isaiah brings here is also a call to repentance. "...let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord... for he will abundantly pardon" (55:7).

Although God offers his free gift to all, it cannot be received by the unrepentant. Very often this is because the unrepentant does not even realize he or she has anything of which to repent.

Reinhold Niebuhr once said that much evil is not done by evil men, but by good men who do not know they are not good. We do not know the depths of our own sinfulness because we generally do not think about it. "It is for want of thinking that we are undone," says Thomas Wilson.

The good news of God — "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" — always comes with a call to examine ourselves by the teachings of Jesus Christ, not the standards of society. As far as society is concerned, we may be OK, fine, or even outstanding. But we must remember that God's thoughts "are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord" (55:8).

So, now is the time for us "return to the Lord," even if we didn't realize that we had been away from him. "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near" (55:6). God is always near, always to be found, but there are times in our lives when we can be more aware that he is ready and waiting to fill our emptiness.

Lancaster Farming

Established 1955
Published Every Saturday
Ephrata Review Building
1 E. Main St.
Ephrata, PA 17522

—by—

Lancaster Farming, Inc.
A Steinman Enterprise
William J. Burgess General Manager
Andy Andrews, Editor

Copyright 2002 by Lancaster Farming

Lancaster Farming

An Award-Winning Farm Newspaper

- Keystone Awards 1993, 1995
- PennAg Industries 1992
- PACD Media Award 1996
- Berks Ag-Business Council 2000
- Recognized for photo excellence throughout the years by the Northeast Farm Communicators