

Lancaster Farming

OPINION

Animal ID System: Will This Work?

Dr. John Enck Jr., state veterinarian and director of the Bureau of Animal Health and Diagnostic Services, spoke recently at the annual meeting of the North East Farm Communicators in Gettysburg.

The topic: a national animal identification plan that could be used as a tool for disease traceback to the farm.

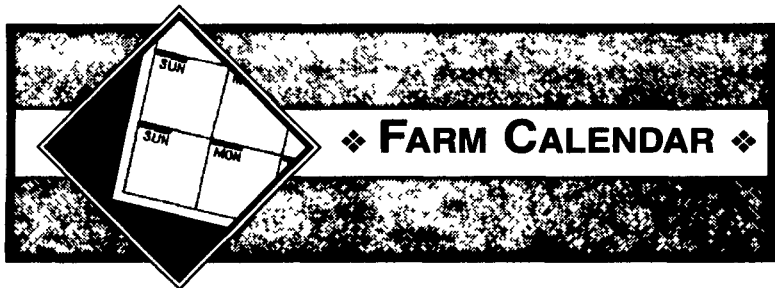
The universal ID system would include lots of information embedded on a computer chip in a simple animal tag: animal name, tag number, age, species, gender, and an immunization history — all accessible electronically. That information could be databased so that, when the animal is processed, the animal's complete physical history would be known. Also, the farm where it was raised can be identified.

"Consumer pressure is key to this industry identification system," said Enck to the ag journalists.

Legislation to make this mandatory across all species could end up in the final Farm Bill.

Now, a typical eartag costs about \$5. But what about the cost benefits, especially when it is placed on an \$8 chicken? Must every animal, no matter what, be electronically identified and cataloged?

Some states, such as New York, would really love every animal, including those in live bird markets, electronically ID'd. But unless the price on the tags drops dramatically, and until the right computer software to handle the enormous tasks this would entail is developed... perhaps a pragmatic solution is still some time away.



Saturday, April 6

Maryland Tested Bull Sale, Wye Extension Center.

Maryland, Delaware Advanced Shearers School, Ridgely and Harvey Thompson Farm, Uniontown Road, Westminster, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., (301) 724-3320.

Penn State Master Gardeners of Wyoming County, Spring into Spring Symposium, Shadowbrook, Tunkhannock, 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., (570) 278-1158.

Alpaca Day, central New Jersey, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., (609) 261-0696.

Spring Bargain Fling, Penn State Ag Arena.

Southern Cove Power Reunion Association Spring Plow Days, club show grounds, 9 a.m.-6 p.m., (814) 766-3715.

Bus Trip to Wye and Central Maryland Bull Test Sale, Queenstown, Md., noon, (301) 334-6960.

Farm Safety Day Camp, Junge Farm, Sechler Road, New Tri-poli.

Sunday, April 7

"Celebrate Midlife: The Best Is Yet to Be," Oglebay Resort Conference Center, Wheeling, W.Va., thru April 9.

Alpaca Breeders Open Farm Visits, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, (609) 261-0696.

Monday, April 8

Mid-Atlantic Farm Credit annual stockholders' meeting, Level Fire Hall, Level, Md., 6 p.m.

Heifer International Fund-raising Dinner, Yoder's Restaurant, New Holland, 6 p.m. Also April 9, East Fairview Church of the Brethren, Manheim, 6 p.m.

Pepper Pest Management Strategy Program, Columbus, Ohio, 9:30 a.m.-6 p.m. and April 9, 7:15 a.m.-2:30 p.m., (937) 454-5202.

Berks Conservation District banquet, Ag Center, Leesport, 7 p.m.

Pa. Farm Bureau Harrisburg Legislative Conference, Capital Rotunda, 3 p.m.; banquet Harrisburg Hilton and Towers, 6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 9

Two-Day Milking Center Management Short Course, Atherton Hotel, State College, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., thru April 10, also April 18-19, (814) 652-6430.

Mid-Atlantic Farm Credit annual stockholders' meeting, Best Western, Westminster, Md., 6 p.m.

Pa. Poultry Sale and Service Conference, Nittany Lion Inn, Penn State, thru April 10.

Migrant and Immigrant Health in Rural Pennsylvania, Penn State Conference Center, State College, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., (814) 863-5050, or (800) 893-4602.

Westmoreland County Horticulture Seminar, 7 p.m.-9:30 p.m.

Tri-State Dairy Nutrition Conference, Fort Wayne, Ind., thru April 10, (330) 264-8722.

Seminar on Trade Opportunities, MDA Headquarters, Annapolis, Md., 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m., (410) 841-5881.

Pork Quality Assurance Program, Susquehanna County

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How To Reach Us

To address a letter to the editor:

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- By e-mail: farming@lannews.inf.net

Please note: Include your full name, return address, and phone number on the letter. Lancaster Farming reserves the right to edit the letter to fit and is not responsible for returning unsolicited mail.



Now Is The Time
By Leon Ressler
Lancaster County Extension Director

To Update Your Commercial Berry Production Guide

Kathy Demchak, Penn State Department of Horticulture, has announced that Penn State's Commercial Berry Production and Pest Management Guide, 2002-2004, should be available by the middle of April.

There are a number of changes in this version. One is that the guide is a 3-year version this time around. This will put it on a production schedule that will make future versions available earlier in the year, with the intention of having them available for sale in time for winter meetings. Additions to the current version are a table of small fruit pesticide chemical and trade names with information on preharvest and re-entry intervals of each one. Brief overviews of protected (high tunnel and greenhouse) culture are included in the strawberry and bramble chapters.

The pesticide table that covers fungicides used on strawberries includes information on the chemical class of each fungicide so that growers can tell which ones have different modes

of action for purposes of resistance management. Information on production, pesticides labeled for each crop and rates, and cultivars has been updated.

Information on nurseries and other sources of production supplies has been updated and expanded to include sources of biocontrol supplies, promotional supplies, high tunnels, and more in addition to the information on irrigation, fumigation, row covers and plastic mulch, specialized equipment, and packaging that was already there. Check with your local Penn State Cooperative Extension office to see if the new guides have arrived. You don't want to start the new season without updating your information.

To Manage Soil Fertility For Drought

Dr. Doug Beegle in the Crop and Soil Science Department shares the following principles on managing soil fertility during times of drought. First, plants growing in soils with optimum fertility will be more efficient at utilizing what water is available. Thus, cutting back on fertility in anticipation of a drought is often a false economy.

Be sure your soil test levels are at least in the optimum range. However, lower yields will take up fewer nutrients. Therefore, if you can predict the effect the drought will have on yield, you can reduce maintenance fertility applications. Keep in mind, though, if you cut back and then we get rain, you could end up being deficient.

Nitrogen rates are closely related to expected crop yield. Splitting N applications allows you to wait further into the season to see what the conditions are and what the yield potential might be before you have to decide how much N to apply. Delaying application of N also allows the use of the PSNT to refine your N recommendation. This is especially important where manure is a major component of your N program.

Low pH can have an especially large impact on water use efficiency, because as the soil pH approaches 5.5 or lower, root growth is significantly

reduced. Fewer and shorter roots will only be able to extract water from a small soil volume. Ideally, soils should be limed to maintain the pH between 6 and 6.5 for most crops.

Another concern is problems related to taking soil samples in dry, hard soils. Several people have noted greater-than-expected increases in soil P and K and decreases in soil pH in soil samples taken since last fall. This is likely a result of taking shallower soil samples. In no-till or chisel plow fields, especially, there is significant stratification of nutrients and pH. Thus, taking shallow soil samples can result in very different and misleading results.

If the soil is too hard to sample, you would be better off waiting until you can do it right, rather than compromising the accuracy of the results. If you notice that your soil test results are higher in P and K and lower in pH than expected, be suspicious that the results may not be right.

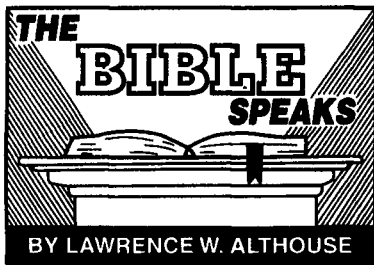
Finally, there is a greater chance for fertilizer injury in drought conditions. All fertilizers are salts, which at high concentrations can injure plants. Generally in our humid climate we get enough rain to keep the salts diluted to a safe level. However, in drought conditions, this may not be true. This is of greatest concern with starter fertilizers because we are intentionally concentrating fertilizer near the seed.

The rule of thumb is that the total N + K₂O should not exceed 70 pounds per acre for normal 2-inch by 2-inch starter placement. If fertilizer is placed directly with the seed, the total N + K₂O should not exceed 15 pounds per acre. It is especially critical that we do not exceed these levels in drought conditions. Also, related to starter fertilizer management, the recommendations that urea should not be used in starter fertilizer and DAP should be used with caution are more critical in drought conditions.

Quote Of The Week:

"Golf is an ineffectual attempt to put an elusive ball into an obscure hole with implements ill-adapted to the purpose."

— Woodrow Wilson



A BUTTERFLY NAMED 'HOPE'

Background Scripture:

Romans 8.

Devotional Reading:

Romans 8:1-11.

Probably all of us have heard of the legendary Pandora's Box. Many of us forget its all-important ending.

Pandora was a lovely bride sent by Zeus to Epimetheus. One day, Mercury brought her a small golden chest that, he said, was hers to enjoy — but under no circumstances should she open it. However, her curiosity got the better of her and she pried it open, just a little. Out flew a swarm of nasty insects stinging everyone in sight, poisoning their victims with suspicion, fear, hatred, and malice.

Epimetheus and Pandora quarreled at this turn of events, but eventually they heard a sweet voice calling from the chest: "Let me out. Let me soothe your pain." So they fearfully opened the box again and a radiant butterfly flew out. As it lighted on them, their pains were healed. The butterfly's name was Hope.

The bright prospects and horizons

of our youth may all too soon be dimmed by the poison of suspicion, fear, hatred, and malice. Their wounds can be healed only if we will have the faith to open our lives to the butterfly named Hope.

Never Lose God

But hope in or for what? Theologian John Bright reminds us that the prophet Jeremiah was called by God to bring a message of hope to captive Israel at a time when there seemed to be nothing to back up that promise. But Jeremiah never lost hope, Bright says, because he never lost God. The source and body of our hope are God.

In Romans 8, Paul outlines our Christian Hope. First, he tells us that "the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (8:18). At this time, Christians were suffering for their faith. In our country today, we are not persecuted, but that doesn't mean we suffer any less; just more subtly. The Gospel could cost us the respect of our friends, neighbors, and employers. But this pales in comparison with what lies ahead for us in the life beyond.

Second, whatever we do suffer binds us more closely to Christ. Remember, we "suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him" (8:17).

A Foretaste Now

Third, even though the fulfillment is just beyond our sight, we can experience a sample of that hope now, what Paul calls the "first fruits of the Spirit" (8:23). This is much like John speaking of the eternal life which the believer can experience both before and after death.

Fourth, not only will we be trans-

formed, but all creation as well. The whole cosmos will become what God intended for it to be even before he created it. We will live transformed lives in a transformed existence (18:19-21).

Fifth, although we may feel too weak to last through the trials of this life, God's Spirit comes to help us in the midst of them. Because we don't know what God does, we may be uncertain how to pray sometimes. No problem, for "the Spirit helps us in our weakness" and "intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words" (8:26,27).

Sixth, while we may not be able to see any plan or purpose in our lives or the world about us, there is a good purpose for which God has designed us and the world to fulfill. "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose" (8:18:28).

Seventh, despite all those things that seem to be against us, thwarting us in all our efforts, we must always remember, "If God is for us, who is against us?" God is for us and God will prevail.

Finally, there is "nothing... nor anything... able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (18:35-39) The only sure thing in life is God's love in Christ, and that can make us "more than conquerors." So, let us listen for and respond to the voice that calls, "Let me out. Let me soothe your pain." It is God's gift of Hope.

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