



# OPINION

## A Dairy's Contribution

**Don Robinson**  
Lancaster County  
Conservation District Administrator

Consider this — the average size dairy farm with 60 cows on 85 acres provides more than 30 million gallons of net contribution to ground water per year above the amount used by the farm. All regulations affecting water use in Pennsylvania need to acknowledge that open farmland is a net contributor to the groundwater supply.

With the value farmland has in the supply of groundwater, we need a policy that protects and supports the continued maintenance of open farmland in Lancaster County and Pennsylvania.

Example: The average 60-cow dairy farm on 85 acres provides more than 30 million gallons of net contribution to groundwater per year.

- One inch of rainfall over an acre of ground equals 27,000 gallons of water.

- Average rainfall in Lancaster County is approximately 42 inches per year, of which 12 to 15 inches infiltrates to the groundwater (good conservation increases infiltration).

- 85-acre farm x 27,000 gallon per acre inch x 15 inches = 34 million gallons of groundwater recharge.

- 60 cows x 40 gallons of water (average consumption per cow) x 365 days = 876,000 gallons consumed by cows per year.

- 60 younger cows x 10 gallons of water (average consumption/younger cow) x 365 days = 219,000 gallons consumed by younger cows per year.

- Household on farm: 150 gallons (average consumption/household/day) x 365 days = 54,750 gallons consumed by a household per year.

- 876,000 gallons + 219,000 gallons + 54,750 gallons = 1,049,750 total consumed gallons of water on farm per year.

- 34,000,000 gallons of groundwater recharge - 1,049,750 gallons of water consumed on farm = 32,850,250 approximate gallons of net contribution to the groundwater supply each year from a 60-cow dairy on 85 acres.

Of course this will vary from year to year, farm to farm, and family to family. But the net effect is that farms provide tremendous groundwater recharge opportunities. Improved conservation practices can greatly reduce runoff and increase the amount of rainfall that infiltrates to recharge the groundwater supply.

If this 85-acre farm was developed into 300 quarter-acre lots with each household using 54,750 gallons, the water usage on that acreage would be more than 16 million gallons per year. That 16 million gallons would go to the sewer treatment plant and then into a stream or river and not recharge the groundwater. In addition, with the roads, driveways, sidewalks, and house-roofs, there would be at least one-third less open area for water infiltration.

Compare that to the 1 million gallons used by the dairy farm with almost 100 percent infiltration area and no sewers and you begin to see the impact our farms have on water supplies.

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

### To Use Presidedress Soil Nitrate Test (PSNT)

Providing the correct amount of nitrogen for corn production is very important. Applying too much nitrogen wastes money and can contribute to ground and surface water contamination.

If the available nitrogen is less than needed by the crop, however, yields will suffer. If the fields in question have a history of manure use, the PSNT is an important tool to determine which fields should be sidedressed with nitrogen and which have enough residual nitrogen. With the high cost of nitrogen fertilizer and the low price of corn, it is especially important to determine how much nitrogen each field needs.

The PSNT was developed to help answer this question. Research has shown if the soil nitrate-N level is above 21 ppm, there is little chance of an economic response to adding additional N to the field. At soil nitrate-N levels below 21 ppm, sidedress nitrogen will be needed to obtain optimum yield.

This test has most value on fields with a significant contribution from organic N sources, such as a history of manure application or use of a forage legume in the crop rotation. This test is not useful on fields where the primary nitrogen source is from fertilizer.

The soil sample should be taken

when the corn is 12 inches tall or at least a week before planned sidedressing. Walk the field in a random pattern and take 10-20 cores to a 12-inch depth, if possible. If a 12-inch depth is not possible, then take the samples as deeply as you can. Avoid starter bands and other atypical areas. Because of sampling problems, this test cannot be used on fields that received injected fertilizer or manure.

It is important to dry the sample as quickly as possible. Crush the cores and combine them into one sample per field. Spread and dry the samples in the sun or under a heat lamp in a well-ventilated area. Send the samples to a reputable lab for soil nitrate-N analysis, or use a field test kit for soil nitrate-N to determine the nitrate-N level in the sample.

If the level is 21 ppm or higher, no sidedress N is needed. If the level is less than 21 ppm, use the worksheet in the Agronomy Facts 17 publication entitled "Presidedress Soil Nitrate Test For Corn" to determine the nitrogen rate needed. This publication is available from your county extension office and also on the Internet at <http://www.agronomy.psu.edu/Extension/Facts/afact17.pdf>. The worksheet can also be found in the agronomy guide.

### To Learn About The Impact Of The Farm Bill

#### On Pennsylvania's Dairies

Ken Bailey, associate professor of dairy markets and policy in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, said he expects the newly signed federal Farm Bill to be "generous" to Pennsylvania's small dairy farmers.

The new Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 includes a new dairy program called the "National Dairy Market Loss" program.

Bailey said the new program offers help for small dairy farmers who have to cope with volatile milk prices by providing direct federal payments whenever the fluid price of milk in Boston falls below \$16.94 per hundredweight (CWT). The program will cover about 88 percent of the milk produced in Pennsylvania.

"Pennsylvania is unique in that we have about 10,000 dairy farms in the state," he said. "Most Pennsylvania farms have fewer than 100 cows, and that's just the kind of farm operations that Congress intended to support with this program. Unlike many Western states, we can expect the bulk of our Pennsylvania dairy producers to receive countercyclical payments on all of their annual milk sales."

The National Dairy Market Loss program works by making a direct payment to farmers in any month when the Class I price of milk in Boston falls below \$16.94. The payment rate is equal to 45 percent of the difference between \$16.94 and the Boston Class I price. Bailey estimates that the payment rate under the countercyclical program will average 97 cents per CWT for the period December 2001 to September 2002.

"The dairy markets have been weak in recent weeks because of sluggish demand and growth in the milk supply," said Bailey. "That will result in fairly large payment rates under this new program." His analysis indicates that the Boston Class I price was above \$16.94 just 28 percent of the time during the 60-month period from January 1997-December 2001.

"The program is retroactive back to December 2001. Therefore, most Pennsylvania dairy producers can expect to receive a fairly substantial check from USDA some time this summer or early fall. This check, which is for the transition period from December 2001 until they get the program running, will be a one-time payment. Thereafter, payments will be computed monthly and will be received by dairy producers no later than 60 days from the previous month."

Payments are limited to the first 2.4 million pounds of milk from a single "dairy operation" in a given federal fiscal year (which ends Sept. 30). That is equivalent to the amount of milk from a 133-cow dairy operation producing 18,000 pounds of milk per cow.

Pennsylvania dairy farmers will receive instructions from USDA in the next month or so to sign up for the program at their local Farm Service Agency office. They also will receive the regulations that spell out exactly how much milk will qualify for the program. The sign-up period should begin no earlier than July 13, 2002. The countercyclical payment program is expected to end Sept. 30, 2005. USDA is still writing the regulations that will determine the definition of a "dairy operation."

Bailey warns that Pennsylvania dairy farmers should consider this program as temporary. "We should take these payments and focus on making our farms more competitive over the next three years," he said. "That way, if the program ends, we'll be better positioned for the future."

Quote Of The Week:  
"Character is power."  
— Booker T. Washington

### Saturday, June 22

Historic Schaefferstown Cherry Fair and Early American Craft Show, Andrew Schaeffer Farm along Rt. 501, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Wool Pool, Tioga/Potter counties, (570) 742-4337.

Do's and Don'ts of Timber Harvesting, Carbon County Environmental Education Center, (570) 645-8597.

Private Forest Landowners' Conference, Port Allegheny, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., (814) 887-5613.

Field Trip: Westmoreland Woodland Improvement Association, 9:30 a.m., (724) 668-7650.

Maryland Grape Growers' Summer Field Day, Aellen Family of Lingular Winecellars, New Market, Md., 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

### Sunday, June 23

2002 PCC, PSU Summer Institute, Shippensburg, thru June 26.

Mushroom Industry Conference, Penn State Nittany Lion Inn, thru June 26, (814) 865-8301.

Conservation Leadership School, Stone Valley Experimental Forest, (814) 865-8301.

### Monday, June 24

4-H Ambassador Conference, Penn State University Park, thru June 26.

Forest Resources Institute for Teachers at Penn State University campus, 3rd through 12th graders, (814) 863-0401.

4-H Horse Driving Clinics, Northampton County 4-H

Center, Nazareth, (610) 746-1970.

National Holstein Convention, Trump Taj Mahal, Atlantic City, N.J., thru June 27.

### Tuesday, June 25

Allegheny County Fair and Exposition, thru June 30.

Penn State Cooperative Extension for Small Business Owners, Harrisburg Community College, Lancaster Campus, also June 27, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., (717) 270-4391.

Manure Contracting Program, Paulding County Extension Center, Paulding, Ohio, 7:30 p.m., (419) 399-8225.

Conifer School, Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Centers, Wooster Campus, Wooster, Ohio, thru June 26,

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### How To Reach Us

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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.

BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE

## JUSTICE AND JUDGMENT

**Background Scripture:**  
Psalms 72; 82; 113.  
**Devotional Reading:**  
Psalms 72:11-19.

*"When are Americans going to wake up to the fact that lots of poor people are lazy, worthless, and they don't deserve our help?"*

It wasn't so much a question as an affirmation. "Put them in decent housing and they will turn it into a pigpen. Put them in a nice neighborhood and they will trash it. Give them jobs and they'll loaf or just not show up. Give them money and they will spend it on booze or drugs."

I walked away quickly and I was sorry I had overheard these remarks, because they were uttered in church!

I suppose that is not so surprising as it once might have been for, over the past 30 years in particular, I have noted a growing mood in our society that encourages people to despise the poor. This has been during a period in our economy when the gap between the rich and the poor has grown alarmingly and during which

justice leans heavily in the direction of those who can afford it.

Archibald Rutledge has written about the widow of a black preacher who was always doing something for the poor. He was so impressed by her dedication that he built for her, in his own backyard, an immaculate little house. Shortly after the widow moved in, she invited a most disreputable woman in to visit. The widow's benefactor was irate: "How could you have invited that creature into your pretty new home?" Softly, the widow replied: "Jesus would."

### Worthy Of Compassion?

It is your privilege to believe that the poor do or may not deserve our help — but not as a follower of Jesus Christ, for he made it very clear how he regarded the poor and expected us to act toward them. He never taught his disciples to help only those who "deserved" help. Like the great prophets, he understood that God had a very special interest in and compassion for the poor — whether or not they were "worthy."

Jesus taught that the quality of God's judgment would depend upon the quality of our compassion for others: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, and in prison and you did not visit me" (Mt. 25:41-43). Response to the needy, whether deserving or not, is essential, not rituals nor doctrines.

### No Exemptions

In Psalm 82 we have a scene that disturbs some readers because it depicts God taking "his place in the

midst of the gods" (82:1). But before we become embroiled in the specter of the existence of other gods, let us accept this image as simply an imaginative device used to demonstrate the sole sovereignty of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

In verse 2, the Lord castigates these gods for the injustice they tolerate and promote in the world: "Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked" (82:3,4). In Psalm 113, God is praised because "He raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap..." (113:7). Nowhere are the "unworthy" needy exempted from the mercy of God.

We are a society that pretty well knows and heeds the values of things, but less and less do we seem to be aware of the value of people who are needy. Thomas Hood once prayed: "Oh God! that bread should be so dear, and flesh and blood so cheap!" Many people take better care of their car or their backyards than they do the needy of their communities where "bread is so dear and flesh and blood so cheap." The other gods, "sons of the Most High" in Psalm 82, "shall die like men" (v. 6). Because they are not just and do not teach justice, they will lose their divinity and "die like men."

And what will be our judgment from the Lord if we are not just?

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