

Lancaster Farming

OPINION

Accountability Required

We learned that on Tuesday this week, members the National Cattlemen's Beef Association met during their summer session in Reno, Nev.

Just this week, we also took calls from beef producers and spoke to Lancaster Farming subscribers who expressed their concern about what's "really going on," according to a reader who wished to remain anonymous.

A Centre County beef producer noted that while he's receiving 22 cents per pound less for his beef than a year ago, directors of the association are prepared to spend \$10-15 million in litigation to protect the checkoff, he said. All the while, noted the producer, the association is "inviting spouses and family to some rather expensive hotels" — at the cost of the producer.

It makes you wonder about the accountability of checkoffs. While we support the need to educate, inform, and advertise beef and other products to the consumer, why is so much being spent at a time when many ag industry retirees are losing their stock market invested retirement income, selling off the farm, or heading back to a second job in order to support their family?

And why do raw product suppliers in agriculture have to pay for any promotion at all? Why don't the processors and retailers assume those costs? (As an example: do the people who supply leather for car seats have to pay for auto advertising?)

The National Cattlemen's Beef Board points to a recent survey that said 68 percent of the producers approve of the Beef Checkoff Program. Who were these supporters? And what did 32 percent have to say?

In the June-July 2002 National Cattlemen, the official publication of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, the "checkoff dollar," at \$1 per head, is detailed in the 2002 Quarterly Report. More than \$51 million in checkoff dollars fund beef nutrition research and information delivery.

But what, exactly, constitutes "administration" at \$2.25 million per year? Why is \$27 million devoted to promotion, yet another \$5.8 million goes to "consumer info" (what does that mean?) and \$1.85 million goes to "industry info"? More specific details are needed for those who pay the checkoff fee and for those who want accountability.

Beef producers should demand accountability for every single dollar spent. Where did that money go, every dollar of it, and why? A dollar a head adds up — it adds up to a kid's college tuition, a desperately needed new tractor, a few good heifers, a lot of things that directly impact farm profitability.

While we await the appeals process, once again we remind producers: you have to be involved. You don't have to simply go to a meeting. You have to be the director at the meeting. Because it is money — your money — they are spending. Find out what they are spending it on and why.



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

To Attend Manure Application Field Days

Three manure application field days sponsored by Penn State and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture are scheduled the week of July 29, 2002. The first is scheduled for Tuesday, July 30 and is specifically geared for commercial and private manure applicators.

Participation in the field day activities is required for those commercial applicators seeking certification. The second and third days are open to all interested parties and are on July 31 and Aug. 1. The first two events will be conducted at Greater Vision Farm in Fleetwood, Berks County. The third day will be conducted at the Buser Farm in Yorkana, York County.

The events will be highlighted by demonstrations and hands-on activities. The agenda includes a phosphorus index exercise, a soil compaction exercise, a manure application rate exercise, a soil pit demonstration, hand-held global positioning system (GPS) exercise, GPS on field equipment demonstration, and a variable rate application demonstration. If you are interested in GPS applications such as field mapping, record keeping, or GPS field guidance systems, this is a great opportunity to learn more about its potential and get some hands-on experience.

Five continuing education credits for certified nutrient management specialists will be available for those who attend the meeting. A fee of \$10 to cover lunch expenses will be collected during registration. Participants are asked to bring a calculator. Preregistration is requested. To preregister, or if you have questions or need directions, contact Robb Meinen at (814) 865-2987 or rmeinen@das.psu.edu.

To List Your Farm On AgMap

Penn State has developed an interactive World Wide Website for Pennsylvania agriculture that helps consumers, farmers, and businesses find local producers of commodities and services. Called AgMap, the Website's address is <http://agmap.psu.edu>.

The site offers a searchable database that includes products grown or made around the Keystone State, allowing users to locate goods near their home, farm, or business. The site includes complete descriptions of these products and provides information about how to find and contact the growers and producers directly.

Pennsylvania is a national leader in agricultural production, with products ranging from apples to wood being shipped around the world. Yet many Pennsylvanians don't even realize what is being grown within a few miles of their homes, noted Rick Day, AgMap project director and associate professor of soil science and environmental information systems in the College of Agricultural Sciences.

"Local farmers may not be aware that the resources they need are available in the next county," he said, "and area businesses and consumers that use agricultural products might not know that what they need is available locally."

All that is needed to use AgMap is a computer with Internet access and a Web browser. Behind the scenes, Penn State's Land Analysis Lab and the cooperative extension global positioning program maintains a Web-enabled database that is linked to a geographic information system, letting users easily search for farms, farm products, and services based on how close they are to the user. The system has been designed to be extremely easy to use. The information included in AgMap comes directly from the farmers and industry. To

enter information about their businesses, farmers just follow a few simple steps.

"We're confident that AgMap will be good for the state's agricultural industry," Day said, "and that farmers, other producers, and agricultural service providers will want to be on the map. It will improve direct marketing between producers and consumers and will help keep marginal operations in business."

AgMap allows users to search for agricultural services based on location, products, and service types. A consumer might find places off the beaten path that offer locally grown produce, trees, and other products at a low cost. For instance, if a consumer is looking for a farm to pick strawberries, he or she can visit the AgMap Website, enter a home location, and ask for a search of all strawberry growers within a 20-mile radius. AgMap will return a list of all the farms that meet the criteria — as well as a map showing how to get to the farms from the consumer's home.

In addition to helping farmers and buyers find each other, AgMap provides a communications network among agricultural businesses in Pennsylvania. This network allows producers to identify and contact other producers who offer similar products and services, which offers several benefits.

For market analysis, businesses can use AgMap to determine locations of competitors and to determine voids in services where new businesses might be successful. In emergency situations such as droughts, producers with products for sale will be able to find and contact other producers who need products. In cases of plant or animal disease outbreaks, producers will be able to contact similar producers to help determine how they are dealing with adverse conditions. For more information about AgMap, contact Rick Day at (814) 863-1615 or rday@psu.edu.

Quote Of The Week:

"If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted or Beethoven composed music or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, 'Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.'"

— Martin Luther King Jr.

❖ FARM CALENDAR ❖

Saturday, July 20

Northeast Ohio Sheep Field Day, Shady Hill Farms, 9:30 a.m., Newbury, Ohio, (440) 834-4656.

4-H Dairy Show Days, Orange County, New York Fair, 10:30 a.m. Showmanship 10:30 a.m. July 22.

Sunday, July 21

American Dairy Science Association, Quebec, thru July 25, (217) 356-3182.

Clarion County Fair, Rebbank Valley Municipal Park, thru July 27.

Forest Stewardship, Walizer Tree Farms, Centre County, 1 p.m.-5 p.m.

Field Day at Dawn Acres, West Friendship, Md., 11 a.m., (410) 489-4463.

Monday, July 22

Kimberton Community Fair, thru July 27.

Sewickley Twp. Community Fair, thru July 27.

Shippensburg Community Fair, thru July 27.

Troy Fair, thru July 27.

Ohio 4-H State Leadership Camp, Camp Ohio, St. Louisville, Ohio, thru July 27, (614) 292-6941.

Project Learning Tree Workshop for Teachers, Schuylkill County Fairgrounds, 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m., (570) 622-4225.

Dauphin County 4-H Pet Camp at Ag Center, Dauphin, thru July 24.

Tuesday, July 23

Jefferson Twp. Fair, thru July 27. Plainfield Farmers Fair, thru July 27.

Ag Showcase at Cecil County Md. Fair, 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Cecil County Fairgrounds, (410) 996-5280.

Wednesday, July 24

Northampton County Holstein Show, Bangor.

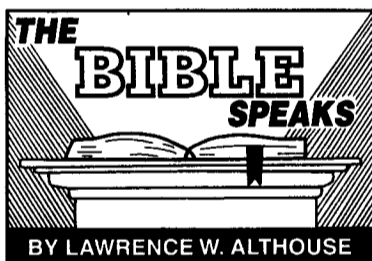
Penn State Variety Trial Field Day, Landisville Center, (717) 921-8803.

Black and White Show and Sale, Plainfield Fair, 10 a.m.

Thursday, July 25

Fayette County Fair, thru Aug. 3. Ohio Field Crops Day, Ohio Ag

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THE HAPPY SINNER

Background Scripture:

Psalms 32; 51.

Devotional Reading:

Psalms 51:1-12.

I suppose there are two types of "happy sinners." One is like the prominent novelist who, out of curiosity, attended a revival meeting. "Are you saved?" one of the ministers asked him. "No," the novelist replied. "Well, do you want God to forgive your sins?" "No," replied the novelist again, "I like my sins." The person who enjoys his sins is probably "happy" — for a time.

There is another type of "happy sinner," however, and the writer of Psalm 32 says, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (32:1). Actually, the term "blessed" is probably more accurately translated as "happy" — "Happy is he whose transgression is forgiven..." This person is really quite different from the first type, for he comes to the point where, even if he once enjoyed his sin, he is no longer happy about it.

The higher and more enduring happiness is that of "the man to

whom the Lord imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit" (32:2).

The Psalmist is not content to cite a principle but grounds his teaching on his personal experience. "When I declared not my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long" (32:3). The Psalmist had contracted some kind of illness and, when he says, "my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer," he is probably speaking of the high fever that accompanied his ailment.

The Weight Of Sin

You may ask at this point: Are you suggesting that the man's illness was punishment from God for some sin or sins the man committed? As clearly as I can say it, my answer is "no."

Obviously, that was a popular belief in some Old Testament times and it is illustrated in the Book of Job when his friends suggest that he must have sinned to bring this calamity upon himself. Job rejected that concept and, as I read the gospels, I find Jesus rejecting it, too.

Although I do not think God inflicts illness upon us to punish us for our sins, I do believe that the weight of guilt within us can be a barrier to health and recovery. Medical studies over the past few decades have tended to support that idea. Experiencing guilt can be a hindrance to the best drugs, therapies, and procedures.

This, I think, is what the Psalmist experienced. Some sin weighed heavily upon him, but he could not bring himself to acknowledge it and seek God's forgiveness. Finally, the Psalmist tells us: "I acknowledged my sin to thee and I did not hide my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord'." When he had made his confession, it was

like a door opening in his body to let in the healing light of God. "... then thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin."

Where Healing Begins

Many years ago a woman came to me asking me to pray for healing. As I listened to her I realized that her life was consumed with hostility and resentment toward her sister. Finally, I told her I didn't believe there was going to be any healing possible so long as she held on to that animosity.

Whether because she relinquished her anger toward her sister or for some other reason, this woman experienced a considerable physical healing, too. Martin Luther was right when he said, "The recognition of sin is the beginning of salvation" (which in Greek means pretty much the same as "healing").

Someone has said that "The deadliest sin is the consciousness of no sin." Maybe we fail to acknowledge our sin because we don't know the great depth and breadth of sin. The Psalmist uses a variety of words to encompass this. "Transgression" is rebellion, deliberate sin. "Sin" means "missing the mark" or wandering off course. "Iniquity" is a distortion or perversion. "Deceit" is actually self-deceit, persuading one's self that something evil is actually good or vice versa. Regardless of the form of sin, the burden of guilt is a terrible weight to carry.

That's why the truly happy sinner is the one "whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

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