



# Lancaster Farming

## OPINION

### Full Slate

Next week we are granted the privilege of attending what we believe is the "show of shows" of field days for Northeast and Mid-Atlantic agriculture: Penn State's Ag Progress Days.

We could spend three days at the event and come back with stories to fill three months' worth of issues, if we could only be everywhere at once.

Besides Ag Progress, we are in the midst of Fair Season, and we cover quite a few fairs in the next several months. We are planning additional fair coverage — some areas of which we have not visited in quite some time.

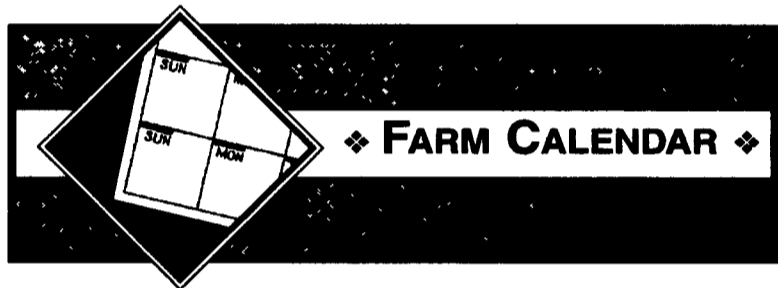
When you see our staff in the field, let them know what you think of *Lancaster Farming*. More importantly, let them know how we can provide a better paper. To survive, we ask for, seek out, and need reader input. We can't serve you better unless we hear from you.

And this editor won't rest. Sometimes editors get accused of sitting in the office, moving papers. Yes, they do that, too, but the editor of *Lancaster Farming* believes that to stay in touch, he has to be out of the office, in the trenches with the troops. So perhaps you'll see me at several fairs and field days.

We have planned upcoming coverage of Elizabethtown Fair, Allentown and others throughout the region. If we can't make it to your fair, we might have a correspondent who can. If not, there are always reliable 4-H extension agents who can send the material in, and we always are very thankful for that.

I hope you learn as much as we have, throughout the years, at Ag Progress Days. We hope to see you there!

And have fun at the fairs!



Saturday, August 17

Central Pa. Holstein Championship Show, Huntingdon County Fairgrounds, Huntingdon, 6 p.m.

Warren County Holstein Show, Fairgrounds, Pittsfield, 11:30 a.m.

Crawford County Fair, thru Aug. 24.

Aquaculture Field Night, Ohio State University at Piketon, 1 p.m.-5 p.m.

Southwest Pa. Woodland Owners Summer tour, Bob Brown's Tree Farm, (724) 852-2663.

Organic Dairy Farm Overview, Tilldale Farm, Rt. 7, Hoosick, N.Y., 1 p.m.-3 p.m.

4-H District Dairy Show, Lycoming County Fairgrounds.

4-H District Dairy Show, Wyoming County Fairgrounds.

Tree Identification Workshop, Ingraham Stewardship Forest, 9 a.m.-noon, (814) 723-0262.

Sunday, August 18

Cameron County Fair, thru Aug. 24.

Franklin County Fair, thru Aug. 24.

Fulton County Fair, thru Aug. 24.

McKean County Fair, thru Aug. 24.

### How To Reach Us

To address a letter to the editor:

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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.

Somerset County Fair, thru Aug. 24.

Williamsburg Community Fair, thru Aug. 24.

Bradford 4-H Achievement Picnic, extension office, 1 p.m.

Monday, August 19

Small Fruit and Tree Fruit and Vegetable Field Day, Rockspring, (917) 694-3596.

Elizabethtown Fair, thru Aug. 24.

Harford Fair, thru Aug. 24.

Mountain Area Fair, thru Aug. 24.

Ohio: Horticulture Field Night, Southern State Community College, Hillsboro, Ohio, (740) 289-3727.

New York: Organic Crop Farm producing direct marketed animal feeds, Lightning Tree Farm, Millbrook, N.Y., 6 p.m.-8 p.m.

Lebanon County Farmland Preservation, 6,000-Acre Celebration at Bowman Farm, 3635 Tunnel Hill Road, Lebanon, 10 a.m., (717) 272-3908.

Farm Bill Workshop, Southern Maryland Association of Realtors Bldg., Hughesville.

Tuesday, August 20

Penn State Ag Progress Days, Rockspring, thru Aug. 22.

Northeast Holstein Championship Show, Albion Park, Troy, 10 a.m.

4-H Wildlife Field Day, Ag Progress site, Rockspring, 9:45 a.m.-3 p.m.

4-H and FFA District Dairy Show, Lebanon Fairgrounds, (717) 270-4391.

Blue Valley Open Holstein Show with Youth Show. Also Aug. 21.

Blue Valley Farm Show, thru Aug. 24.

Hookstown Fair, thru Aug. 24.

Perry County Community Fair, thru Aug. 24.

South Mountain Fair, thru Aug. 24.

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

#### To Harvest Corn Silage At The Right Moisture Level

Extension dairy agent Glenn Shirk reminds us moisture level at time of harvest is one of the most important factors affecting silage quality because it has such a big effect on how well the silage ferments.

Determining moisture levels can be very tricky this year! It may not be as dry as what you think, based on how many dry leaves you see. Remember, the dry leaves may represent only a small percentage of total plant weight, and thus have only a small impact on total plant moisture.

Most of the weight is in the ear and stalk. A stalk that is still green may contain 75 to 80 percent moisture or more, but as hot, dry weather persists, and as the plant speeds to maturity, moisture levels can drop rapidly. Under more normal conditions, as the corn approaches the ensiling stage, whole plant moisture drops about 0.65 percentage units per day. So, if moisture is at 72 percent it would take about 11 days for it to drop to 65 percent (7 point drop/0.65 = 11 days).

This year, there also is a lot of variation from section to section within fields, and as you try to determine the average condition of the field, consider the size of the area affected and also its yield potential. For example, if it represents 50 percent of the field, but its yield potential is only 50 percent of the rest of the field it only has a 25 percent impact on the field's average condition

(0.50 x 0.50 = 0.25).

So, the message is, check the pollination of your fields if there is no grain you can salvage the crop as silage, chop several stalks and determine their moisture content, or at least monitor the moisture condition of the stalks, determine the average condition of the field, and be "ready to roll" when the crop is ready.

A simple way to check moisture is to take 10 ounces of the chopped sample and dry it in a warm but not hot oven or a microwave oven that is on a low setting. Weigh the sample fairly often and when it stops losing weight, you are finished driving off the moisture. If you continue to heat the sample after it is dry, you could burn up dry matter and get an incorrect moisture reading. Therefore it is important to check the moisture fairly often to make sure you don't miss the point when the sample is dry. Weigh the dry sample. The number of ounces of dry weight times 10 is the percent dry matter. The moisture content in percent is simply 100 minus the percent dry matter.

#### To Protect You And Your Family From Silo Gas

Each year farmers face the danger of silo gas, but this year's drought is likely to make the problem worse. This threat has been around since the first use of silos and it is easy to take shortcuts or become complacent about the dangers associated with silo filling.

The fact that many have worked around this for years without a problem contributes to not taking this seriously. However, a simple mistake could cost you your life, so take the time to use adequate precautions.

Silo gas is formed by the natural fermentation of chopped forages in the silo. Several gases are formed and the type of silo the forage is stored in determines the amount of different gases. In a conventional or open-top silo, nitrogen dioxide is the major gas formed. This gas is characterized by a strong bleach-like odor and low-lying yellow, red, or dark brown fumes. It reaches a peak about three days after filling and quickly begins to decrease shortly thereafter, especially if the silo is ventilated. After two weeks it is unlikely that any more gas will be formed, but some could still be present if it was trapped and unable to escape the silo.

Ideally everyone should avoid the silo during the critical period when gases are forming. Since this is not always possible, it is best to use a self-contained breathing apparatus when entering during the danger period. This is the only breathing device that is certain to protect you from all silo gases. Dust masks or even chemical cartridge respirators do not provide sufficient

protection and are not intended to be used where gases are extremely toxic or where the air has been replaced by gases such as carbon dioxide.

If you do not have access to a self-contained breathing device, it is possible to enter the silo safely if the following precautions are followed. First, ventilate the silo and adjacent areas by running the blower 15-20 minutes before entering. All doors should be opened down to the level of the settled silage and the windows in the feed room should be opened. Leave the blower running the entire time you are inside. Never enter the silo unless another adult is present who can go for help if needed. This person should maintain visual contact with you.

Although it will not protect you from silo gases, wear dust mask or some other respirator to protect your lungs from the high concentrations of dust and mold spores, which are found in silos. Keep children away from the silo room and keep it well ventilated all through the time when silo gas could be formed.

#### To Learn About Invasive Species At Ag Progress Days

Plots of corn, soybeans, hay, and other crops will be growing all around the Crops and Soils Tent at Penn State's Ag Progress Days, Aug. 20-22 at the Russell E. Larson Agricultural Research Center. But one of this year's most intriguing crops will be plants that no self-respecting farmer wants to grow.

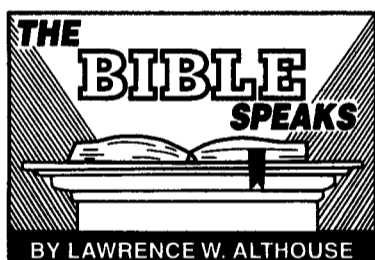
Along with grain and forage crops, Penn State crop and soil sciences faculty will be growing common weeds of Pennsylvania, including some invasive weed species. "Invasive weeds are becoming more of a concern to land managers and farmers," said Greg Roth, associate professor of agronomy. "Our display will demonstrate the invasive weeds that are invading crop and forestland around the state. Some of these invasive weeds actually are cultivated species that we should be concerned about escaping into the wild and taking over natural environments."

The area again will present the latest developments in forage, corn and soybean production. Along with demonstrations of new tillage practices and displays of crop research, Penn State specialists will be on hand to talk to producers about crop-related production issues.

#### 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



### THE WISE FOOL

Background Scripture:  
Proverbs 15 through 17.

Devotional Reading:  
Proverbs 16:16-30.

The wisest people in the world are all "sophomores." The term is derived from two Greek words. The first is "sophos" — or "wise" as in philosophy, love of wisdom. "Moros," on the other hand means "fool," as in "moron," one whose mind is not fully developed. Put them together and you have the "wise fool," one who is wise enough to know that he or she does not know everything. So a sophomore, a second-year student, is one whose mind has been opened to the vast world of knowledge but has not yet grasped all the truth.

The wisest fool of all is the person who realizes he or she will never know it all. The late German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer complained that "The good Lord set definite limits on man's wisdom, but set no limits on his stupidity." Perhaps that is because getting wisdom usually takes time and effort and many of us want it in sound bytes that can be repeated over and over again without ever gaining any real insight.

These chapters in Proverbs are not meant to be read at one sitting. Each proverb is like a jewel to be looked at from all angles and pondered. As there are so many in these chapters, I have arbitrarily picked out four that are especially challenging to me.

#### Speak Softly

The first of these is 15:1-7, beginning: "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Thousands of years old, this is just as relevant today. In your own experience you have probably seen how angry words hastily spoken had the same effect as pouring gasoline over a lighted match. What heartache would we escape if we could learn to give the "soft answer" instead of the belligerent one!

Valere and I conduct an intensive premarital weekend two to three times a year at our church. One of the most important sessions is on communication. We try to help them realize that words that come across as a personal attack almost always make things worse. We teach them to express their feelings without attacking and putting the other person on the defensive.

"Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it. Better is a dinner of where love is than a fattened ox and hatred with it." (15:16,17). This is a challenge to learn what is truly important in life. Many couples, when asked what was the happiest time in their married life, remember when they had little in material goods, but were united in the effort to establish their families. Lack of material wealth did not deny them happiness. Wisdom is learning to realize what is really important in life.

#### Home Rule

"He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city" (16:32).

### Lancaster Farming

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