

Lancaster Farming

OPINION

Fortunate Graduates

We receive a lot of information from various legislators from throughout the state. In an election year, the number of those receipts can be sky-high.

Nothing pleases us more than the releases we receive that can help our youth — directly.

Lately, they've come in the form of notices of the Agricultural Education Loan Forgiveness Program, which benefits state agricultural and veterinary medicine graduates. The program is not new — it began in 1992.

The program, administered by the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA), repays up to \$2,000 annually to borrowers of PHEAA-guaranteed student loans for each year the borrower is employed full-time in an ag-related field. It covers only the PHEAA loans, not personal and commercial loans. The borrower is allowed a lifetime maximum of \$10,000 in forgiveness payments.

The point of the program: keep skilled graduates in the state to assist in developing the state's largest industry, agriculture.

What a great idea! More youth should take advantage of this program.

But while we appreciate this, we are a little concerned. What about loan forgiveness programs for graduates in other fields? We can just imagine a "journalist" student loan forgiveness program.

To be eligible, the borrower must remain in Pennsylvania after graduation and find full-time employment in the operation of a family farm, family farm corporation, or a veterinary practice. Family farms and farm corporations must be owned by immediate family members and produce ag products.

Let's keep the "talent pool" in the state. This is one way. And \$2,000 can go a long way to reducing some of the "mortgage loans" that college students incur on their way to bigger and better dreams.

For more information, contact your local senator or representative.

FARM CALENDAR

Saturday, September 28

Chester County Benefit Auction, Romano 4-H Center, Honey Brook, silent auction 3 p.m., live auction 5 p.m.

Falmouth Goat Race, Governors Stable Park, Falmouth, (717) 367-1966.

Sheep and Fiber Festival of New Jersey, Salem County Fairgrounds, Woodstown, N.J., 9 a.m. Also Sept. 29, (856) 467-4418.

New York State On-Farm Demonstration by Livestock Consultant Gerald Fry, Emil Schmidt farm, Schaghticoke, N.Y., 10 a.m. Also 2 p.m. Harrier Fields Farm, Schodack Landing, N.Y.

Regional Farm and Food Project, Albany, N.Y., (518) 427-6537. Springton Manor Farms Family Day, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., (610) 344-6415.

Sunday, September 29

International Dairy Short Course, Babcock Institute, University of Wisconsin, Mad-

ison, Wis., thru Oct. 2, (608) 265-4169.

Adams County 4-H 100th Anniversary Celebration, Adams County Natural Resource and Ag Center Pavilion, noon picnic, programs 2 p.m., (717) 677-7249.

Monday, September 30

Hunters' Food Safety program, Penn State Extension Cumberland County Extension office, Carlisle, 7 p.m.-9 p.m., (717) 240-6500.

Tuesday, October 1

New Holland Fair, thru Oct. 5. Keystone International Livestock Expo, Farm Show Complex, Harrisburg, thru Oct. 7.

PennAg Poultry Council Golf Outing, Fox Chase Golf Course, Stevens, (717) 651-5920.

PASA Workshop, Sustainable Hog Production, Lions Club Park, Centre Hall, noon-4 p.m., (814) 349-9856, ext. 6.

Ag Engineering Workshop, Huntingdon County Extension Office, thru Oct 2, (717) 248-9618.

ADADC meeting District 15, Randolph Fire Hall, N.Y., 8 p.m.

Wednesday, October 2

World Dairy Expo, Alliant Energy, Madison, Wis., (608) 224-6455.

Frederick Maryland Soil Conservation District Annual Cooperators Banquet, New Midway Fire Hall, New Midway, Md., 7 p.m., (301) 695-2803, ext. 3. New York: Regional Farm and



Now Is The Time

By Leon Ressler

Lancaster County Extension Director

To Continue To Conserve Water

The National Weather Service Climate Prediction center released their latest seasonal assessment on Sept. 19.

The forecast is not promising for most of the Northeast. Drought is expected to continue or intensify through December for Pennsylvania and the surrounding states of New Jersey, Maryland, West Virginia, and Ohio.

The unknown of course is the possible path of storms such as Isidore. Although one storm could hardly make up the rainfall deficit of the last two years, a storm such as Hurricane Floyd in 1999 could make a huge difference. In that year Floyd ended drought in the coastal areas which had been experiencing serious rainfall deficits. However, until we get very significant relief, it is critical to reduce water use as much as possible. If you would like to check the climate prediction center's full report, you can find it at <http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/>.

To Update Your Knowledge Of Nutrient Management And Water Policies

A new educational resource is available to help farmers and others

understand nutrient management and water policies, regulations, and programs. The Nutrient and Water Policy Update Website (<http://agenvpolicy.aers.psu.edu>), sponsored by Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, features news and notices on rapidly changing regulations, upcoming public policy decisions, and how citizens can become involved, fact sheets, research reports, and links to useful online resources.

The site, assembled by Alyssa Dodd, extension associate in agricultural economics and rural sociology, and Charles Abdalla, associate professor of agricultural economics, is available for citizens, farmers, agricultural and environmental interest groups, educators, government agencies, academics, and others interested in protecting water resources.

"Nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen are natural components of water ecosystems, but in excess may become pollutants, causing algae blooms or contaminating drinking water," Dodd said. "There are a number of federal and state regulations and programs currently in place to reduce nutrient pollution. The requirements and programs also are evolving."

"Pennsylvania's Nutrient Management Act regulations are under review, and the federal government is proposing new requirements for large concentrated animal feeding operations. In addition, the U.S. Farm Bill is making more than \$17 billion in environmental and conservation funding available to farmers over the next 10 years. Information found on this Website can be used by farmers and others interested in protecting Pennsylvania's valuable water resources to stay current on these issues."

To learn more, visit the Website at <http://agenvpolicy.aers.psu.edu> or contact Alyssa Dodd at (814) 863-5884. Additional nutrient management information can be found online at <http://nutrient.psu.edu/>.

To Install Rollover Protection Systems On Tractors

About 30 percent of the tractor-related deaths in Pennsylvania in 2001 were a direct result of tractor overturn. Annually, tractor overturns account for more than 100 fatalities nationwide. A farm safety expert in Penn State's College of Agricultural

Sciences said farm families should install rollover protection systems (ROPS) on all operating tractors.

"Tractor manufacturers have voluntarily installed ROPS on all new tractors since 1985," said Dennis Murphy, distinguished professor of agricultural engineering. "Still, nationwide data show that nearly two out of three tractors in the United States do not have an approved ROPS structure on them." Murphy also said farmers should be particularly familiar with safe operating principles for tractors and understand load and balance dynamics for operating tractors on uneven or hilly terrain. He emphasizes that farmers also should know the correct procedure for pulling loads to prevent the tractor from rolling over backward.

"Use of ROPS and seatbelts on tractors can save lives and injuries," Murphy said. "It may cost extra dollars to retrofit an older tractor with ROPS and seatbelts, but the result will be safer operating conditions for every tractor operator on the farm."

Murphy offers a few preventative tips that will help farmers make their tractor-driving time safer. First outfit all tractors with rollover protection systems and seatbelts. Make sure you've read the operating manual before using any equipment. Perform service and maintenance on the tractor before operating it. Set the wheel tread at the widest possible setting. Slow down when turning, crossing slopes or driving on slick, rough or muddy surfaces. If you must drive on steep slopes, drive in reverse up the slope or forward down the slope. Never drive across a steep slope. Avoid ditches, embankments, riverbanks and holes. Stay away from edges. If the tractor becomes stuck in a ditch, always back out. Hitch all loads to the drawbar. Pull the load slowly and increase speed very gradually. Use front-end weights to increase tractor stability when pulling a heavy load. If the tractor has a front-end loader, drive with the bucket or load as low as possible. Finally, Murphy suggests you should lock brake pedals together when traveling on public roads.

Quote Of The Week:
"Your past is important, but it is not nearly as important to your present as is the way you see your future."

— Dr. Tony Campollo

THE BIBLE SPEAKS

BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE

ARE YOU LISTENING?

Background Scripture: Jeremiah 25 through 26; 2 Chronicles 36.

Devotional Reading: Proverbs 4:20-27.

Many years ago I saw a Broadway production of "The Lark," Jean Anouilh's remarkable play about Joan of Arc. I remember vividly, if not verbatim, a memorable scene in which the Dauphin (heir to the French throne) petulantly asks why, if he is the Dauphin, God speaks to Joan instead of himself. Joan's reply is relevant, not only to the Dauphin, but all of us: "He does speak to you, but you do not listen."

One of the most frequent complaints against God is that he is silent when we need to hear from him. I have myself made that complaint from time to time. But, I have come to believe that the problem is not that God does not speak to us but that, despite our protestations to the contrary, we are simply not listening.

We need to remember that God speaks to us in many different ways. Sometimes it may be in a vision or a heavenly voice, but more often it is the "still, small voice" within that

came to Elijah. Sometimes he may speak to us through a scripture passage, a creative work, or the testimony of someone else.

Often, God speaks to us through prophets, and there is our problem. Prophets rarely, if ever, come to tell us how well we are doing; mostly, they come to us with warnings, and we do not like warnings and their implied or explicit criticisms. And what we do not want to hear, we often do not hear.

Should Have Listened

Nat G. Wong tells the story of a man with swollen eyes and bandaged face who was asked by a friend what the trouble was. "Nothing," the man replied, "except that at a party last night I was standing up talking when I ought to have been sitting down listening." That is something that could be well applied to many of us and our society.

This is also the message that Jeremiah brought to the people of Judah in June, 605 B.C. "For twenty-three years... the word of the Lord has come to me, and I have spoken persistently to you, but you have not listened. You have neither listened nor inclined your ears to hear, although the Lord persistently sent to you all his servants the prophets..." (Jer. 25:3,4). This prophetic word was not just a single pronouncement that the people missed, but a persistent message to which they have failed again and again to give ear.

The good news here is that God is very persistent. Why? Because he wants us to hear and respond and thus avoid the consequences of our way of life. A vengeful God would give the warning message only once and then make us suffer the consequences. But God comes to us repeatedly through his prophets so that we do not fail to hear the message. The bad news, of course, is that as persistent as God is in speaking to us in this

manner, we seem equally persistent in closing our ears and hearts to him.

Selective 'Listening'

One of the reasons for this may be that we do not recognize his prophets because we don't like their message: "Turn now, every one of you, from his evil way and wrongdoings... do not... provoke me to anger with the work of your hands" (25:5,6). Prophets always want us to turn from our "evil way and wrongdoings" and most of the time we don't believe our ways and doings are "wrong" or "evil."

There's the sticking point: prophets call "evil" what we think of as "good." So we assume that either the prophet is wrong or his/her message is for someone else.

The intention of the prophet is not to condemn us, but to call us to turn from our ways that displease God. They are sent not to destroy us, but save us. Unfortunately, all too often we respond to God's messengers — and they may be messengers who do not even know they are messengers of God — not merely with indifference, but anger and even violence. Jeremiah narrowly escaped public wrath (26:10-19) but another prophet, Uriah, was slain in the presence of King Jehoiakim (26:20-23).

In our own times, who might be or have been God's unrecognized prophets? What messages that have annoyed or angered us might be sent from God? From what "evil ways" may God be calling us to "turn away," both as individuals and as a society? Are we failing to listen to God and is it possible we are provoking his anger?

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