

Lancaster Farming

OPINION

Upholding The Right To Farm

Guest Editorial
By Walt Peechatka
Executive Vice President
PennAg Industries Association

In the editorial by Brian Snyder on Oct. 26 he stressed the fact that rhetoric was growing stronger on both sides of the issue concerning Senate Bill 1413. His rhetoric provided a solid argument on one side but missed a significant number of points on the other side of the issue.

It is important to understand some of the points on the other side of the issue, and a little history, both of which are missing from Snyder's arguments.

Senate Bill 1413, as he suggests, is quite simple, so simple in fact that one can read it in far less than five minutes. Not only is the amendment contained in Senate Bill 1413 simple, so is the original Right to Farm Act of 1982.

The Right to Farm Act, which has been on the books for 20 years, protects farmers from harassment and frivolous ordinances and lawsuits. The wording in the original act is not that different from the wording in the amendments contained in Senate Bill 1413. It was the purpose of the Right to Farm Act to protect agriculture from local governments, which, under pressure from local citizens, might adopt frivolous, onerous, and illegal ordinances.

But in spite of the Right to Farm Act, some local governments have done exactly what the Act was intended to prevent. *Rather than complying with the Act, local governments have violated it.* Therein lies the rub. Should agriculture roll over and play dead because, as Snyder asserts, they might feel they "should not be able to operate in a vacuum" or that "their enemies are their customers"? I think not.

As an aside, I assume that 20 years ago the legislature, in its wisdom, intended that as farming advanced and new technology was developed, farmers had the right to use that new technology and apply it in order to increase productivity and profits. They certainly didn't intend that farming in 2002 should be done the same way as it was in 1950 or in 1982 when the Right to Farm Act was enacted.

Conversely, there is no requirement that farmers modernize and use current technology. The farmer can operate like he did a few decades ago

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

**To Evaluate This
Year's Pumpkin Crop**
Lancaster County horticulture agent Tim Elkner suggests harvest is a good time to evaluate the successes and/or failures of your crop production practices. He recommends you take a few minutes now to look back at your pumpkin crop for this season. How did you do?

Obviously the drought had a large effect on the crop, especially if you did not have any way to irrigate. How did your handles look? What about the amount of rot that you saw in the field and after harvest? How about the stand of the crop in the field — were there many skips? What caused those vines to die? Let's look at some of the factors affecting pumpkin yields and quality. In order to have the greatest

yields from a field, you need to have the field covered with pumpkin vines. If you had a poor stand, hopefully you took some time to determine the cause. Did you have poor germination? Was it from bad (old) seed or was your planter not set properly? Either of these factors needs to be corrected before planting next season.

Did you lose vines after germination? If so, why? Elkner visited and talked with several growers this season that had very high cucumber beetle pressure in their fields. These beetles spread bacterial wilt. Normally bacterial wilt is not much of a problem in pumpkins, but the high beetle pressure seems to have resulted in more diseased and dead vines in the fields this year. In addition, the beetles lay their eggs at the base of the vines and the larvae feed on the pumpkin roots.

While you will rarely see a vine die because of this feeding, it will still be weakening the vine. If you did not have good beetle control this year, again begin planning for next season. Remember: Admire treatments only last a few weeks, and then you will need to switch to foliar sprays to control the beetles that move into the fields later in the season.

Dr. Brent Loy, pumpkin breeder at the University of New Hampshire, has noted that semi-vining types of pumpkins are not as drought-tolerant as the older, more vigorous types. He reports that premature dieback of vines can occur in semi-vining types of pumpkins under conditions of stress, especially if the vines are carrying a heavy fruit load. Increased planting of the newer cultivars that are semi-vining probably has made the pumpkin crop more susceptible to the re-

cent summer droughts. Perhaps you should consider having part of your crop in an older or more traditional vining-type cultivar as a bit of "insurance" against a dry summer.

Most of the growth of face-type pumpkins is completed by 15 to 20 days after pollination and fruit set. This means that the period of flowering and fruit set is the most important time to have adequate moisture and fertility in your pumpkin crop. During this period of rapid fruit growth, even slight amounts of water stress will reduce the final fruit size.

After a pumpkin reaches maximum size (in face-type pumpkins), the handle begins to harden. This process occurs from 20 to 35 days after fruit set. During this period of time the pumpkin flesh is accumulating starch. By 30 days after pollination the fruit may begin to show orange color and by 40 to 45 days after pollination, the pumpkins of many varieties will appear ripe or fully colored.

So what does it mean to have shriveled handles at harvest or shortly after? Poor handles are an indication that the plants were stressed during the period of time when the handles were being developed. Once the fruit is colored, it cannot "go back" and finish hardening the handle.

Another area to evaluate is your disease control. One advantage of a dry season is that there are generally less disease problems. However, if you stopped spraying, once your pumpkins were mature but several weeks before harvest, you might have allowed disease to take advantage of the rains in September to infect your fruit.

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◆ FARM CALENDAR ◆

Saturday, November 9
North American International Livestock Expo, Louisville, Ky., thru Nov. 22.
Perry County Farm Safety Workshop, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Loysville, 7 p.m.-8:30 p.m.
Warren County Holstein Club and DHIA Annual meeting, Building Fairgrounds, Warren County Extension, 8 p.m., (814) 563-9388.
Sunday, November 10
Ag Bankers Association National Conference, Indianapolis, Ind.,

thru Nov. 13.
Monday, November 11
Poultry Health and Management Seminar, Kreider's Restaurant, noon.
Lancaster DHIA Open House, 1592 Old Line Road, Manheim, thru Nov. 12, (717) 665-5960.
136th Annual Grange Convention, Double Tree Hotel, Jantzen Beach, Portland, Ore., thru Nov. 17, (888) 447-2643, ext. 116.
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◆ FARM FORUM ◆

Editor:
Each month in Pennsylvania 119,000 animals are lost as wildlife is killed by collisions with motor vehicles on Pennsylvania

highways and roads. A fresh wildlife kill or several individuals can be found dead or dying each month nearly every mile.

Rabbits appear to be number one in deaths, while the number two species is believed to be all reptiles, cold-blooded creatures including but not limited to snakes, toads, frogs, and worms mostly in spring through fall. Number three most frequent wild animal killed appears to be tied among squirrels, woodchucks, skunk, opossums, songbirds, and migratory birds as the season progresses.

Deer are an unclear number four followed by raccoon, domestic animals, foxes, porcupines,

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THE BIBLE SPEAKS
BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE

TRAGEDY AT LAST!

Background Scripture:
Psalms 42:5-11.
Devotional Reading:
Lamentations.
Promised for so long, when tragedy finally comes, it arrives with a thunderclap of shock. And then, at last, the lamentations begin — the lamentations that did not need to be, but came inexorably because hearts and heads were hardened.

After World War II we saw photographs and newsreel footage of the horrific destruction of European cities: Berlin, Dresden, Hamburg, and so many others. Thirteen years later, when I made my first trip to Europe, much of the destruction was still evident.

These are sights I will not ever forget.

Then, there was Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I saw only the photographs and movie footage, but it was enough to remain in my memory as long as I live. A large percentage of the world's population has never seen such destruction and I pray that they never will. But we must never permit these images to vanish from our planetary consciousness, because they speak to us powerfully of the judgments we bring upon ourselves.

"How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow she has become, she that was great among the nations... has become a vassal" (1:1).

An Inside Job!
Examining and pondering the destruction of civilizations past, historian Arnold J. Toynbee has observed that "no great civilization is ever murdered, but dies from internal weaknesses and betrayal; it commits suicide." (quoted by Dwight E. Stevenson).

This is what really happened to Judah. Although Jerusalem was sacked and destroyed by the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar, this carnage was really an "inside job," a hardness of heart against God and his will that invited disaster. It is as if unconsciously this is what Judah had been seeking and now they had achieved tragedy at last!

Surely the people of Jerusalem had not invited this desolation. But the writer of Lamentations tells us, "Jerusalem sinned grievously, therefore she became filthy; all who honored her despise her... Her uncleanness was in her skirts; she took no thought of her doom; therefore her fall is terrible" (1:8a,9). I am reminded of the wisdom of Walt Kelly's comic-strip character Pogo: "We have met the enemy, and he is us!"

There is shock and sorrow expressed in Lamentations. There is resentment, too: "Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow which was brought upon me, which the Lord inflicted on the day of his fierce anger" (1:12). "The Lord has become like an enemy, he has destroyed Israel" (2:5).

Exile No Longer
There is also, however, enlightenment and confession: "The

Lord is in the right, for I have rebelled against his word" (1:18). Once the people of Judah can embrace their responsibility for this tragedy, healing can begin to take place.

"For the Lord will not cast off forever, but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not willingly afflict or grieve the sons of men" (3:31-33). For a time they have had to pay grievously for their rebellion, but "this too shall pass."

"The punishment for your iniquity, O daughter of Zion, is accomplished, he will keep you in exile no longer" (4:22).

The Book of Lamentations is not all lamentation. It also acknowledges the goodness of God and the hope that is dependent upon that realization. "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness" (3:22,23).

Like most of you, I have known times of great sorrow, anguish, and despair. It has always seemed that when I had fallen as far as I could fall, at the bottom of the pit I have been able to realize that I cannot be separated from the steadfast love of God, unless I myself do the separating and keep myself separate.

Having found that my trust in myself was so far from being enough, I have been able to join with the writer of Lamentations and say: "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."

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