

Lancaster Farming

OPINION

Blue Ribbons Or Not, Support Our Farm Show Youth

Champion Sale Tuesday, Jan. 14, 9 a.m.

It's sad, sometimes, when the reports we provide for our outstanding 4-H individuals in the state literally look at only the blue-ribbon winners and their blue-ribbon efforts.

Sometimes little or no attention is paid to the white-, yellow-, or even red-ribbon winners. How unfortunate.

Perhaps we can be accused of spending too much time on farm family kids who allow mom or dad to spend a lot of money and go visit the Midwest in search of the best genetics to show at fair and Farm Show events. Naturally, the judge is going to pick the best. Sometimes you can literally buy your way into a champion at many fairs and at Farm Show, too.

That's too bad. It would be nice if all our champions were homebred. But what can be really distressing is when the family and friends and the businesses that are supposed to back those families and friends at major livestock sales are "no shows."

We've seen many petitions from our 4-H youth for buyers to come out to the events. Many business leaders show up. Some should show up. Of those who do attend and get a bid number, often (except in rare cases) the price is flat.

The children work hard. If they don't get the blue ribbon, their own self-esteem suffers. How many kids fought long and hard through 4-H exhibit season, winning many whites, yellows, and reds, and never the blue? And then failing to see even mediocre bids for their animals?

Where was the industry to support them?

Businesses provide direct financial support of fairs and exhibitions throughout the year. We provide features of Farm Show families in our annual issue. We provide the listings of the names of the top three winners during major livestock contests — a policy we adopted long ago because of the huge volume of fairs we cover and the limited space we find ourselves to run results in. We'd like to list all the winners, even to last place if we could — but space limits us.

I myself attend many fair sales throughout the season, as many as I can physically get to. Perhaps I don't cover enough.

The Penn State extension agents are there to take care of things, which we are thankful for, when we simply cannot be two places at once.

Like many of you, we are striving to give the youth the recognition they deserve. This should be especially true as we enter a new era of Farm Show, a show that once again will focus completely on farming.

It's a brand-new Farm Show, folks, with a new day and time. The sale, instead of Thursday as in years past, is Tuesday, Jan 14, at 9 a.m.

Make plans to bid, and bid high and often. Don't forget the local fairs, too! The support doesn't end with Farm Show. Because only then — despite maybe having a less-than-perfect ribbon — can our youth regain a feeling of accomplishment for their hard work.



Now Is The Time
By Leon Ressler
Lancaster County Extension Director

To Protect Your Cows' Udder Health

Beth Grove, extension dairy/environment agent in Lancaster, reports the chilly weather throughout our area has many dairy farmers thinking about udder health, specifically chapped teats and teat problems.

Dramatic temperature changes and post-dipping in very low temperatures can easily lead to more chapped and frozen teats as well as teat-end lesions. Many studies have shown cows with chapped and damaged teat ends are more vulnerable to infection by Staph Aureus and other organisms. Frostbite is also a risk with very cold weather, particularly in sick cows or cows with udder edema.

For these reasons, many producers, especially those with freestall or loose housing barns, dislike post-dipping cows after milking for fear of frozen teats and additional problems. Farmers in tiestall barns often keep the cow herd inside rather than allowing them outside for exercise and heat detection. Before you lock the barn door and keep your cows inside all winter, try these cold-weather tips to prevent teat end damage during the winter months.

In the cold winter months, try pre-dipping instead of a water wash. Washing removes the natural oils from the teat, increasing the incidence of chapped teats in winter weather. Check teat-end conditions often so that you can detect problems early. Don't stop post-dipping in very cold weather! This will give bacteria a fighting chance to colonize teat ends in the herd. After post-dipping, allow a 60 second "kill time," then blot the teat dry with a paper or cloth towel. (Try warming the teat dip before use to reduce drying time.)

Use a post-dip with 5-10 percent "skin conditioners" to reduce the incidence of chapping in windy cold weather. There are "winter" postdips available, some that are dry or powdered, and others that contain high amounts of emollient these have shown varying amounts of success in on-farm trials. It is recommended that you always use products that have been proven to be effective in reducing new cases of mastitis. Make certain they have been well tested! Carefully use salves, ointments, and creams during wet, freezing weather. Some research has shown that these products will actually increase bacterial growth at the teat end.

It is best to store teat dip in a heated room if possible during the winter months. In very cold conditions, some teat dips may "separate" and will not have as effective a bacterial kill if not remixed before use. Before refilling the dip cup, thoroughly mix contents of the storage container.

To Learn About Tomato Pith Necrosis

High tunnels can provide ideal environmental conditions for the growth of tomatoes.

According to Andy Muza, extension agent in Erie County, these environmental conditions can also be conducive to organisms which cause diseases. One little-known disease, which was observed on tomatoes in a high tunnel this season, is tomato pith necrosis.

Tomato pith necrosis, also called black pith, is a disease caused by the bacterium *Pseudomonas corrugata*. It can be a serious disease of greenhouse-grown tomatoes. In the field, infection rates have been reported as high as 10 percent.

This disease was first reported from greenhouse-grown tomatoes in England in 1978. About the same time, Dr. Felix Lukezic, Department of Plant Pathology, Penn State, isolated the bacterium from symptomless roots of greenhouse-grown alfalfa plants. This was the first report of the occurrence of *P. corrugata* in the USA. In the early '80s, the occurrence of tomato pith necrosis was reported from field-grown tomatoes in both California and Florida.

A combination of factors seems to favor the development of this tomato disease. These factors include excessive plant vigor, conditions of high humidity, and extended periods of cloudy weather. The first symptom of infected tomato plants is often yellowing of young leaves. More severe leaf symptoms include wilting and chlorosis.

Infected stems have brown external lesions. Stems cut lengthwise may show internal symptoms, such as brown discoloration of the pith and vascular system. (Pith is spongy tissue in the center of tomato stems. The vascular system is the conductive tissue, xylem and phloem, which transports water and nutrients throughout the plant). Progression of the disease causes a breakdown of the pith, which results in hollowing of the stem.

There is no effective treatment for infected plants. However, plants that are not severely affected can recover if environmental conditions improve (that is, the arrival of warm, sunny weather). Preventive measures to minimize the occurrence of this disease in high tunnels include adequate ventilation to avoid high humidity levels, especially during periods of cloudy weather and avoiding excessive nitrogen applications to prevent overvigorous plant growth.

Remember that different fungi and bacteria can cause similar disease symptoms on plants. Therefore, correct identification of diseases is important to avoid unnecessary or ineffective fungicide applications. Contact your county extension agent for assistance in identification of diseases.

Quote Of The Week:
"In taking revenge, a man is but even with his enemy; but in passing it over, he is superior."

— Francis Bacon

❖ FARM CALENDAR ❖

Saturday, December 7
Auction hosted by Washington County Junior Fair Board at Washington County Ag Center, Sharpsburg, 6:15 p.m., (301) (Turn to Page A26)

❖ FARM FORUM ❖

Editor:
This year, the committee entered the Denver, Solanco, Ephrata, New Holland, and Manheim parades. Our float could not have been half of what it was if we didn't have local companies and individuals who believed in us and the importance of dairy in everyone's life.

How To Reach Us
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These individuals and companies helped us with materials, drivers, and encouragement we needed while waving through the cold and windy parades. A big "thank you" goes out to our drivers Andy Augsburg, Gene Nolt, Darlene Groff, and Ken Scott. I say to them, without your commitment to drive, we could not have gotten started. Thanks!

We also had companies involved that donated the use of their tractors or wagons. I am so glad that year after year these companies have made a commitment to help us. Not only did we have people donate their driving skills and transportation, but

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BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE

BLESSED TO BLESS

Background Scripture:
Luke 1:26-56.
Devotional Reading:
Psalm 146.
Stories about babies usually evoke a sense of tender miracles. It is difficult to be hard-nosed and cynical in their presence. We clothe them in pastel blues and pinks and their nurseries are usually the happiest, brightest rooms in the house. Nothing un-hardens a hard heart than a baby.

So, much of the story of the coming of Jesus and John in Luke 1 basks in joyous expectation. Mary's holy fear is overcome by Gabriel's assurance that her son, Jesus, "will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord will give to him the throne of his father David..." (1:32).

This same mood prevails when she goes to visit her kinswoman, Elizabeth, who also is expecting a divinely conceived child. As Mary enters Elizabeth's house, she calls her greeting and at this, her unborn son, John, leaped in her womb, inspiring Elizabeth to proclaim: "Blessed are you

among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?... And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord" (1:42-45).

Call Her Blessed

Mary is also inspired and, in a moment of ecstasy, she proclaims, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed..." (1:46-49). Mary was correct: all generations since then have called her "blessed" and honored this simple peasant woman. Mary is blessed so that she herself may be a blessing.

This blessing, however, is not about honor, but about the purpose of God, and it is at this point in the story that Luke paints, not in pastel shades, but dramatic, arresting, and shocking colors that fairly leap off the page of his gospel. The little baby sent by God is a blessing, but his coming will transform forever the meaning of "blessing."

In this baby God will have "scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts," he will have "put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of low degree," he will have "filled the hungry with good things," and "the rich... sent away empty" (1:51-53).

This does not sound like an invitation to a baby shower, but a manifesto to revolutionize the world. It calls for the powerful to be put down, the rich impoverished, and the poor in possession of God's great bounty. God is calling for a world that was quite opposite that of the one into which Jesus was born, a world al-

most totally different from the one which we inhabit today.

William Barclay says that the "Magnificat" of Mary is a call to moral, social, and economic revolution. And if we do not hear that in Mary's song, we do not hear it at all.

A Marching Song

These revolutionary pronouncements in Mary's "Magnificat" will not permit this story to be merely "cute." The "Magnificat" of Mary (1:46-55) is not so much a lullaby as it is a militant marching song, except that we are called to take up arms instead of arms.

The advent of Jesus Christ is a time for awareness of the injustice and corruption that infects the world that hides behind lavender parameters and Christmas decorations. It is a time to be aware of the appalling human need that exists wherever we turn. Jesus comes to bless us and make us to be blessings for others.

Christmas is a family event, so long as your family is big enough to include the man who falls victim to robbers on the road to Jericho. No road to Jericho in your neighborhood? It's there, but under a different name. Look for that road and that person and you will find it and him. There are people on every road you travel who need you to stop and bind up their wounds.

The coming of Christ will be for us a blessing only if we also will be a blessing to others.

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