

# Lancaster Farming

## OPINION

### The Full Farmer

The English philosopher Sir Francis Bacon once noted, "Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man."

In other words, if you want to know what you're talking about, you'd better be well read on the subject. And those that are well read can be of information to know a bit of history and have the so-called "well of information" to prove it.

With that in mind, a couple of years ago we began a column entitled Farm Shelf, which pointed out good books for farmers to read and enjoy. The column continues to be a source of education and fun, especially to those of us who read and write about books of interest to farmers.

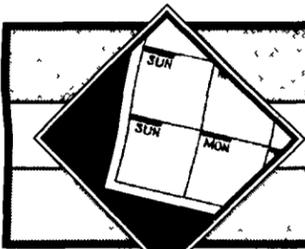
The Pennsylvania Newspaper Association Foundation, in a letter last month, noted that, in a joint program with the National Education Association, the Read Across America Program celebrates the joys of reading, and honors well-known children's author Dr. Seuss (Theodor Geisel) as well. Geisel's birthday is on March 2. The official Read Across America celebration is March 3, this coming Monday.

Read Across America is established to demonstrate the importance of reading. Reading is the essence of good writing and good business. The best farmers are also the most well read.

Farming should be a lifelong learning enterprise, and many good books have been written by and about farmers on the lifestyle and business choice that continues to change and grow.

Good books are our guides and inspiration. They convey the success and heartaches our times found in our industry. But they also pass along the wit and wisdom garnered from experience the farmers themselves share.

Let's make Read Across America Day this coming Monday an important one for our industry.



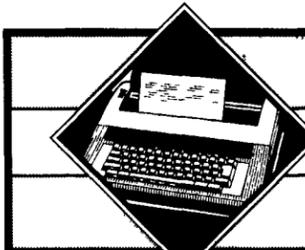
❖ FARM CALENDAR ❖

Saturday, March 1

Maryland Grape Growers' Association annual meeting, University of Maryland, Howard County Fairgrounds, West Friendship, Md., (301) 432-2767.  
New and Beginning Farm Workshop, Grantville, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m., (717) 664-7077.  
Northeast Regional Christmas Tree Growers' Meeting, Genetti Lodge and Conference Center, Hazleton, 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m.,

(570) 325-2788.  
Woodland Owners Conference, Penn's Inn, Alvin C. Bush Student Center on campus of Pa. College of Technology, Williamsport, 8:30 a.m., (570) 265-2896.  
Northeast Forest Landowners Conference, Luzerne County Community College Conference Center, Nanticoke, 825-1701.  
Holston Club Annual Meeting, Basil Leaf Restaurant, Mon-

(Turn to Page A34)



❖ FARM FORUM ❖

Editor:

It's unfortunate that *Lancaster Farmer* chose to bash "green banking" rather than welcome it. (Editorial, Feb. 15).

#### How To Reach Us

To address a letter to the editor:

- By fax (717) 733-6058
- By regular mail: Editor, Lancaster Farming P.O. Box 609, 1 E. Main St. Ephrata, PA 17522
- By e-mail: farming@lancnews.inf.net

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.

Green banking programs are offering new sources of reduced-cost credit to producers who meet certain environmental standards. What's so distasteful about that carrot? It surely beats a stick.

Over and over, I hear producers complain about escalating regulatory and consumer expectations, and ask who is going to help them pay for their increased costs.

When the community offers to help with these costs, whether through lower-cost credit, public funding for conservation programs, or market premiums for production systems like organic, and grass-based livestock, farmers need to pay attention.

Farmers already accept that they will be paid for production

(Turn to Page A35)



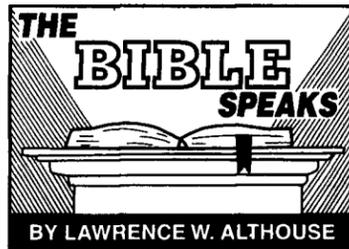
**Now Is The Time**  
By Leon Ressler  
Lancaster County Extension Director

#### To Upgrade Your Crop Insurance Coverage

This week, USDA Secretary Ann Veneman announced a very significant increase in the cost share for crop insurance premiums of up to 50 percent. The 2003 Targeted States Crop Insurance Financial Assistance Program will be available in 15 states. The eligible states are Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

The effect of this additional discount is that producers can often increase their level of coverage/protection two or three levels (that is, 65 percent up to 75 percent or 80 percent) for the same amount of net premium cost as they had initially budgeted.

This will benefit producers in two ways. First, they will have much more and better protection in the event of a crop loss. Second, if they have a good crop, they will add a nice premium credit to the premium account that will help reduce premium costs in the long run. With this additional support, producers are



THE BIBLE SPEAKS  
BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE

#### IMMEDIATELY!

Background Scripture:

Mark 1:1-45.

Devotional Reading:

Luke 4:14-21.

The New Testament scholar, Edgar J. Goodspeed, said that one should begin to read the Bible by reading first the Gospel of Mark and, second, reading Mark at one sitting. So often, we approach the Bible in bits and pieces and, valuable as that may be, we also lose something if we do not also get the big picture.

As another Bible scholar, Dwight E. Stevenson, puts it, "Mark is so simple that a child can understand it and so powerful that dictators cannot reckon with it; so brief that it can be read in the time required to glance through the evening newspaper, and so searching that a man will spend his whole life trying to live up to it."

If you read the Gospel of Mark from chapter one through 16, there is one word that appears 41 times, on the average of more than twice in each chapter. That word is "immediately," and it appears nine times in

only paying about 20 cents per dollar of gross premium.

It is important to be aware, however, that the enrollment deadline is March 15. If you already have crop insurance, contact your agent promptly to upgrade your coverage if you are interested. If you do not have crop insurance, this additional support adds to the reasons why you should use this risk management tool. If you need help in finding your local crop insurance agents, contact your local Farm Service Agency office and they can supply you with a list of agents.

#### To Prune Backyard Fruit Trees

The winter wonderland around us makes it seem like spring is far away. But the calendar reminds us that a season change is near.

Dr. Tim Elkner, horticulture agent in Lancaster County, reminds us the end of winter is a good time to prune your fruit trees. The primary purpose of pruning young fruit trees is to develop a framework for maximum fruit production later in the tree's life. Once that's accomplished, pruning focuses on increasing light penetration into the tree, removing less productive wood, and maintaining the crown of the tree in an efficient, stable form.

There are two general types of pruning cuts employed: heading cuts, which are used to reduce or maintain tree size, and thinning cuts, which are used to remove entire branches. Visualize a tree as seen from above without its leaves. Branches radiate from the trunk much like the spokes of a wheel. To allow the sunlight needed for proper fruit development and coloration to enter the center of the tree and to make harvest easier, some of these "spokes" may need to be thinned out.

Consider these items as you work around the spokes or "scaffold" branches of a tree. First, remove suckers or watersprouts, which are those vigorous non-fruiting shoots that often appear at the base of grafted trees or in crotches and sites of previous pruning cuts. Then remove or head back to healthy side branches any stubs or broken branches that will invite insect and disease problems. Third, remove

downward-growing branches since they develop few fruit buds and only serve to shade more productive branches. Next, head back or remove the less productive of two rubbing branches since rubbing injury invites problems. Finally, remove any interior branches that are of low productivity. These branches are also shading more productive branches below them.

Backyard fruit trees are rarely overpruned. The inexperienced backyard arborist is often timid about making cuts. As long as pruning is not accomplished by topping or shearing the tree, it will almost always benefit the tree's growth and production.

A common question related to pruning is whether cuts made during pruning trees in the yard should be coated. Prior to the mid-1970s, it was standard practice to coat all pruning wounds with an asphalt-based paint or dressing. These materials have since fallen out of favor after research proved they do not prevent decay in wood and in some cases actually stall the wound response and protect wood-rotting fungi. In short, make the proper pruning cut and let the tree handle the rest.

#### To Be Counted In

The U.S. Agricultural Census

Thus far, reported numbers for the U.S. agricultural census shows returns are down in the Northeast. This is a problem because the census will direct how USDA resources are allocated and fewer farms mean fewer dollars for our region.

Report forms will be accepted through June 2003 as the USDA reviews and summarizes the data. If you are not counted, your industry will not be properly represented. If you still have your census form, fill it out and send it in. If you did not receive a census report form, you can call (888) 424-7828 to get a copy. Your answers are completely confidential, exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, and cannot be subpoenaed in a court of law.

Quote Of The Week:

"My great concern is not whether or not you have failed, but whether you are content with your failure."

— Abraham Lincoln

Mark 1 alone. ("Immediately" appears 14 times in Matthew, 12 times in Luke, and only twice in John.) This word is very characteristic in Mark, not only in his use of it, but in the general tone of the gospel itself. There is a continuing sense of immediacy.

#### Get Ready!

This is apparent in the very first three verses: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, 'Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare the way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" (Mk 1:1-3). Mark doesn't fool around, but gets right to the heart of the matter: get ready!

In 1961 there was a James Cagney film, "One, Two, Three!" The dialogue and action moved at an accelerated pace that left the viewers breathless. That's the way it is in Mark. He covers the baptism of Jesus in three verses and the temptation in the wilderness in one. And, when Jesus begins his ministry, it is with that same sense of crisis: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel" (1:14,15).

Why this breathless urgency? I think the reason is that Mark believes that the gospel message was urgent. Jesus is not someone people can sit and ponder endlessly. "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of heaven is at hand." No more waiting! It's arriving now! If you want to be part of it, do not wait to make your commitment.

#### Who's Sorry Now?

Just as the timing is immediate in Mark, so the response sought is remarkably simple: "Repent, and believe in the gospel." To repent means more than being sorry for one's sins. The word in New Testament Greek is "metanoia," and it signifies a complete change of mind, a new direction of will, and an altered purpose in life. Repent is a call to transformation. There is no time in our lives when we are perfect, when we do not have good reason to repent and let our lives be transformed again!

The other challenge is to "believe in the gospel." This does not mean a mere mental acceptance of the good news, but a conviction so strong and commanding that we once again begin to be the persons Christ has called us to be. Someone has said that Christ became what we are, so that we might become what he is. So long as we have fallen short of the stature of Jesus Christ — and who hasn't? — there is a need for repentance and radical recommitment to the good news of Jesus Christ. Immediately! — not later.

When Jesus had gone into the synagogue in Capernaum and healed a "man with an unclean spirit," the spirit cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." (1:23,24). Think of it, the evil spirits recognized Jesus as "The Holy One of God" and immediately they responded to him. Are we not to do the same?

#### Lancaster Farming

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### Lancaster Farming

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