



OPINION

Mortgage 'Burnout'

Lancaster County, home to the number one cash crop, tobacco, faces a dismal future for tobacco growers.

How often have we seen or heard that type of opening paragraph to stories about the future of tobacco farming in Pennsylvania?

What once was the county's number one cash crop, what growers called the "mortgage burner," can't even be grown anymore! Colleges such as Penn State have been warning growers to step away from growing tobacco and to grow produce or some other niche-market crop.

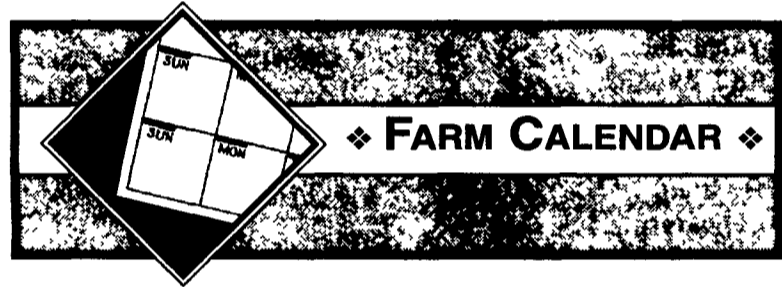
(Problem is, if too many people grow the "niche-market crop," it's no longer a niche market. Then what do you do?)

Last week we reported that Vector Tobacco, a North Carolina company that contracted tobacco in the county and guaranteed \$1.50 per pound, no longer needs a crop this season. We've heard reports that many growers have depended heavily on the sale of the tobacco to do what tobacco used to do best in the county: get rid of mortgage and other farm debts. In the early 1990s, at the Paradise Tobacco Auction, we reported prices as high as \$1.60 or more per pound! — that went a long way toward getting rid of farm debt.

Vector, processed by Trileaf Tobacco out of New Holland, worked to provide tobacco for the Quest brand of low- and no-nicotine cigarettes sold in seven states. Though Quest is going well, according to a company spokesperson, Vector has enough supply and doesn't need tobacco from Lancaster County or anywhere in Pennsylvania.

We have witnessed the death of this mini-industry. Just to provide the scope of this death, we turned to the Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistics Service (PASS) and came up with numbers from 1980 until the present, in terms of just how widespread, alarming, and severe the

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FARM CALENDAR

Saturday, May 10

Western Pa. Sheep, Lamb, and Goat Sale, Mercer 4-H Park, 5 p.m.

Spring Scavenger Hunt, Ludwig's Corner Riding and Driving Club, Marsh Creek State Park, 9 a.m.-noon, (610) 827-7780.

Beekeeping Short Course, Dauphin County extension center, Dauphin, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Open House Livestock Processing Plan, Oak Hill, N.Y., 10:30 a.m.-2 p.m., (518) 765-3512.

Keystone Palomino Exhibitors Association Benefit Auction, Windy Hill Farm, Lititz, (717) 627-2263.

MAAFS Judging School, Frederick, Md. Fairgrounds, (301) 662-8025.

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FARM FORUM

Editor:

In regards to your opinion column May 3, you raise some very good questions. You are right — questions like the ones you raise do demand answers. But are you suggesting that Pennsylvania Farm Bureau (PFB) has them all? Whats wrong with looking at the farmers who are successful, both conventional and otherwise?

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.

You quoted State Rep. Art Hershey as saying those who think "grandfathers way of farming is the way to farm are in la-la-land" and you said "we agree." Does this mean Lancaster Farming is taking sides? Are you speaking for the entire staff? If you are, then I would suggest you are doing more harm to agriculture in this state then SB1413 could have.

My family has farmed in Pennsylvania for about 300 years. Some of us conventional and some of us not. My father was more conventional and in most years was lucky to break even. I am not and our farm makes a profit. If being a profitable farmer means living in "la-la-land," then here I'll stay. Grandfather's way of farming is not the way. Its a way of farming.

Those who opposed SB1413 never spoke out against farming in this state, only against the corporations who would sell these "bill of goods" to our rural com-

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Now Is The Time

By Leon Ressler

Lancaster County
Extension Director

To Begin Scouting For Alfalfa Weevil

The late spring season this year has impacted the development of crops and insects. Insects that normally feed on crops are developing later by the calendar than last year.

Alfalfa weevils are beginning to feed on the new alfalfa crop. The population of economic significance results from eggs laid in the spring by overwintering adults. These adults move into hay fields containing alfalfa as soon as the plants begin to grow and lay their eggs in the stems of plants.

The weevil eggs normally hatch between mid-April and early May. Larvae hatching from these eggs reach maturity in approximately three weeks, normally from late May to early June. Injury symptoms are usually most evident during mid- to late May. Once the larvae pupate, they are done feeding for the year and scouting efforts can cease.

For this reason, scouting for this pest only needs to occur during the first growth period (first cutting) of alfalfa. However, in fields where high numbers of weevil are present at cutting, the stubble should be checked to assure that regrowth is not being pre-

vented by larvae feeding on the new shoots.

Begin scouting the warmest fields on your operation with a southern exposure and those with a soil type that is susceptible to drought. Begin scouting all fields once evidence of alfalfa weevil injury is observed in the warmest fields or when 300 degree days (base threshold of development equals 48 degrees Fahrenheit) have accumulated since Jan. 1. This will typically occur between May 1 and May 15 in most years and at most locations in the state.

To sample a field, carry a bucket (a 2- or 3-gallon plastic bucket will do fine) and walk through the field in either a "W" or "zigzag" pattern. Randomly remove an entire stem from 30 locations at approximately equal intervals to obtain a good representative sample of the field. When collecting an alfalfa stem sample, carefully cup your hand around the top of the stem before removing it. This will prevent any larvae from dropping off that may have been on the stem. Now, remove the stem at ground level and place it top first into the bucket. Repeat this procedure as you follow your pattern across the field.

After you have collected 30 stems in the bucket, separate them into 3 to 4 small bundles and beat each bundle 10 or 15 times against the inside of the bucket to dislodge the larvae from the stems. We are primarily interested in the large larvae (green in color and 1/4 inch long), since the big ones do the most feeding. In most cases only the large larvae are easily dislodged from the plant. Smaller larvae tend to hide in leaflet collars and are difficult to dislodge. Count all the larvae in the bucket, including the small cream-colored ones. Record this number on your field data sheet.

Next, measure 10 of the stems to get an average height of the plants (in inches) in the field. Record the average height of the plants on your data sheet. Also, observe the stems and record the percentage with buds. The number of flower buds present will help you decide whether to spray or harvest the field if weevil larvae numbers are near the economic threshold and the field is near the harvesting stage of development. If

the field is in full bud when the economic threshold is reached, early cutting is usually the best pest management alternative.

More detailed information on economic thresholds can be found on the Penn State Entomology Website at (<http://www.cas.psu.edu/docs/CASDEPT/IPM/FieldCrop/table17.htm>), in the Field Crop IPM Training and Reference Manual, or the publication "A Pest Management Program For Alfalfa In Pennsylvania." Check with your local cooperative extension office for copies of the publications.

To Apply Fungicides To Strawberries

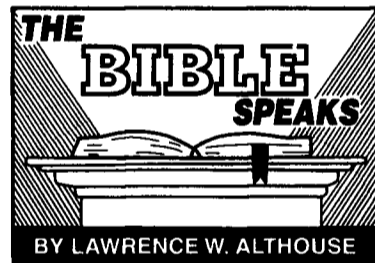
Gray mold for Botrytis blight is the most serious disease affecting strawberries. The causal organism, Botrytis cinerea, can live both as a parasite and as saprophyte on decaying plant debris.

Botrytis blight usually starts as a blossom infection, which then later invades the fruit, causing them to rot. Rot may first appear at the base of the fruit or when the berry is in contact with the soil, other damp surfaces, or other rotten fruit. The rot can destroy the berry within 48 hours. As ripening increases and the humidity remains high, a characteristic gray, fuzzy coating or web produced by the fruiting fungus covers the strawberry fruit. As the disease progresses, spores are produced and are easily blown or splashed onto healthy foliage. Once the fungus gets established in a field it can produce spores continuously throughout the season.

Moisture is necessary for the spores to germinate and infect plants. Therefore the disease is favored by humidity and cool conditions. If you need to irrigate and you are using overhead irrigation, it is important to irrigate during the sunny part of the day and shut down the irrigation while there is still enough afternoon sunshine to dry off the plants and fruit before nightfall. This will limit the ability of the Botrytis spores to germinate and infect the fruit or blossoms.

Because most Botrytis infections

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BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE

WHO DO YOU SAY HE IS?

Background Scripture:

Mark 8:28 through 9:8.

Devotional Reading:

Philippians 2:5-11.

Perhaps you have noted in reading Matthew, Mark, and Luke that Jesus is usually reticent to refer to himself with a title. If he refers to himself by any designation, it is most often as the "son of man." A term from the Old Testament, printed 97 times in the Book of Ezekiel, it is literally translated as "son of the man" and can mean either "the human one" or a very special human. Significantly, as Prof. Walter Wink notes, in 121 pages of the New Testament (NRSV), Jesus, and only Jesus, uses this term more than 80 times.

When he questions the disciples, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answers, "You are the Christ" (the anointed one, Messiah). It is curious that Jesus does not confirm Peter's confession either explicitly or implicitly. Instead we are told, "And he charged them to tell no one about him" (Mark 8:30). When Jesus stands captive before Pilate, he is asked: "Are you the king of the Jews?" and his response is oblique: "You have said so" (Mark 15:2).

Why is Jesus so noncommittal about his title? I believe it was because he knew that each of the titles his followers gave him were subject to different interpretations and he did not want to be so narrowly defined. Some Jews clearly thought of the Messiah as one who would lead them to military victory over their foes. Obviously, Jesus didn't want people to think of him as that kind of messiah. Nor did he want people to equate him with an earthly king. If he was God's anointed one, he wanted to define that role as God alone intended him to fulfill it.

Teacher, Lord, Master

During his earthly ministry, his disciples called him variously "Teacher," "Lord," or "Master." For more than 2,000 years since the resurrection, however, Christians have wrangled over the precise meaning of these titles. We call him "King of Kings," "Lord of Lords," "Son of God," "Second Person of the Trinity," "Incarnate Word," among others. These titles can be meaningful to Christians, but they can also be so very divisive. When we argue and even fight over them, we miss the whole point.

Yes, Jesus wanted to know "Who do men say that I am?" and also "But who do you say that I am," but after charging them to tell no one about him, Mark tells us: "And he began to teach them that the son of man must suffer many things... and be killed..." (8:31). And then he goes on to define what it means to be his disciple.

It is not a matter of finding the right title to apply to Jesus, but, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." The exalted titles we give him matter little if we do

not respond to his call to follow him — even to bearing a cross.

The call of Christ is not to a fool-proof theology, but to a life in which Jesus is present. "For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?" (8:36) What good is it to call Jesus by all the right titles and subscribe to the best theologies if we do not follow him as Lord and Master?

Ashamed Of Jesus

These next words from Jesus may seem not to be applicable to us, but don't jump to any conclusions: "For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (8:38). That couldn't possibly refer to us, because we are never ashamed of him. Or are we?

Whenever we decide that the way of Jesus Christ is not applicable to the way we relate to our families, our communities, or our world, is it not because we are ashamed of him? Whenever, instead of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we let our political ideologies or personal prejudices determine how we do business, how we respond to the "have-nots," how we regard society's prisoners and our attitudes toward our enemies, is it not because we think of his teachings as not "practical" for the real world in which we live? Is that not being ashamed of him?

The way we live our lives is the way we answer his question: "But who do you say that I am?"

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