



# Lancaster Farming

## OPINION

*Editor's note for all Guest Editorials: Please keep in mind that the opinions of the writers don't necessarily agree with the editor's. For the benefit of our diverse readership, we strive to provide a balance of opinion in Lancaster Farming.*

### Beef Checkoff In Jeopardy

Guest Editorial  
By Paul Slayton  
Executive Director  
Pennsylvania Beef Council

On July 8, in a case that could have far-reaching implications for both the U.S. and Pennsylvania beef industry, a three-judge panel of the Eight Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a ruling that the Beef Promotion and Research Act violates the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

The verdict was not completely unexpected. The industry knew that ultimately a decision on this case would likely be made by the U.S. Supreme Court. This news was disappointing for me, executive director of the Pennsylvania Beef Council, and our 21-member board of directors — elected beef, dairy, and veal producers who guide the state's checkoff program. Disappointing because we know the many success stories credited to the beef checkoff program.

The beef checkoff program has been very popular by a majority of producers for about 15 years. While the referendum was supported by 79 percent of cattlemen in 1988, surveys, as recent as January 2003, indicate that support is repeatedly in the 65-70 percent range. Beef, dairy, and veal producers, small and large, have continued to think that this is the best self-help program available to them. It has provided them with their own research departments, a channel to promote their product, and a way to reach consumers with the beef nutrition message through education and marketing.

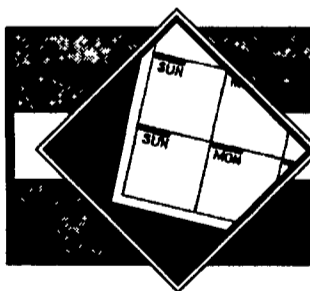
Recent research conducted by Dr. Ward, Florida State University, indicated that for every \$1 invested in these programs, producers have seen a \$5.67 return on investment. Since initiation of the beef checkoff program in 1988, it has contributed \$6.46 billion of income to producers nationally.

It's no secret that chicken has made steady strides on beef demand during the last 20 years. Our primary competitor, in the meat case and on the menu, used a plethora of quick and easy products, developed by branded manufacturers, and the touted health benefits of the boneless, skinless chicken breast to make a dent in beef market share. Thanks to the beef checkoff, though, the story line has changed.

During the last four years, beef demand is up 10 percent. Led by checkoff-funded new product innovations, a great beef meal is five minutes from the dinner table, competing head-on with convenient chicken entrees.

In addition, the industry recently unveiled a series of national print advertisements challenging consumers to think outside the boneless, skinless chicken breast. Twelve beef cuts meet USDA requirements for lean or extra lean, falling between a chicken breast and a chicken thigh as measured by grams of fat. And as our staff has been telling

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❖ FARM CALENDAR ❖

Saturday, July 19

- Pa. 2003 Summer Cattlemen's Field Day at Em-Tran, Elizabethtown, (814) 238-5888.
- New York State Holstein Picnic and Kissamee Summer Sale Fest, Cazenovia, N.Y., 11 a.m., (717) 949-2046.
- Gentle Logging for the Landowner, Hills Grove Ranger Station,

#### How To Reach Us

To address a letter to the editor:

- By fax: (717) 733-6058
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farming@lancasterfarming.com

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.

- 2 p.m., (570) 746-1844.
- Md. Brown Swiss/Ayrshire Field Days, Frederick County Fair, (301) 984-0880.
- Adams County Cooperative Extension Trial Gardeners Open House, Adams County Extension, (717) 334-6271.
- Composting Seminar, Bernard's Orchard, Kennett Square, 10 a.m., (610) 696-3500.
- Monroe County Conservation Camp, Stony Acres, East Stroudsburg, thru July 26.
- Maryland Christmas Tree Association meeting, Mt. Hope Farms, Hagerstown, Md., 8:30 a.m., (410) 374-9538.
- Bradford County 4-H Round-up, 4-H Building, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., (717) 265-2896.

Sunday, July 20

- Youth Conservation School, Northern Lancaster County Fish and Game Protection Association in West Cocalico Twp., thru July 26, (717) 299-5361, ext. 117.

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### Now Is The Time By Leon Ressler

Lancaster County  
Extension Director

#### To Keep Your Cows Cool

Summer heat can really take a toll on your herd's milk production. The highest-producing cows are the ones most vulnerable to the damaging effects of heat stress, warns Dennis Buffington, professor of agricultural and biological engineering at Penn State. Milk production decreases as heat stress increases. He points out that even greater economic loss results from the reduction in cows' conception rates as heat stress rises.

"First and foremost, the cows need to be protected from direct solar radiation," he said. "The shading system must be designed so that the animals have full access to quality feed and water while in the shade. Sufficient floor space needs to be provided under the shade structure so that the animals do not crowd together to stay in the shade."

"The underside of the roof needs to include insulation material to reduce the thermal radiation load on the cows. Finally the shade structure needs to be high enough and include a ridge opening so that natural ventilation will be enhanced."

Evaporative cooling systems to reduce heat stress levels on cows are common in the southern U.S., but

few are used by Pennsylvania dairy farmers, according to Buffington. He anticipates that evaporative cooling systems will become more popular in Pennsylvania as production levels of cows increase and as producers search for effective ways to reduce heat stress. The evaporation of just one gallon of water per hour at 85 degrees Fahrenheit provides nearly the same cooling effect as a ¼ ton air conditioner unit.

"This amount of cooling can handle the heat produced by, on average, two lactating cows," he said. "The actual amount of water that can be evaporated depends on the humidity level of the air."

Different approaches to providing evaporative cooling for dairy cows have been used over the past several decades. Buffington believes the use of a sprinkler or misting system in conjunction with forced ventilation is most effective.

"It is not sufficient simply to cool the air with evaporative cooling and hope to significantly reduce the damaging heat stress effects on the cows," he said.

"It is essential to wet the cows and to provide forced ventilation to speed up the rate of evaporation," he said. "The direct wetting of the cows cools them only a limited amount — it is the rapid evaporation of the water that really does the cooling. The need for rapid evaporation is why it is essential to use fans in conjunction with sprinklers or misters. Natural ventilation is not sufficient, at least in the climates of the Northeast, to provide the quick evaporation."

During heat stress conditions, cows must be wetted intermittently so that the water can evaporate from the surface of the cows. Effective evaporative cooling systems generally provide a spray of water for about a minute every three or four minutes with the fans running continuously. An evaporative cooling system should be developed with enough flexibility so that the wetting durations and intervals can be easily modified in the field.

The water spray should be directed onto the back and sides of each cow, Buffington explained. "Ideally, all the water should evaporate on the back and sides of a cow so that none of the sprinkler water

comes down to the udder because of the danger of contaminating the teat openings with bacteria from the hide," he said. "It also is important to keep the floor surfaces and bedding materials dry."

Buffington contends that investments in effective systems to relieve heat stress for dairy cows will pay dividends in increased cow comfort, milk production, and conception efficiency. "As the production levels of dairy cows increase, they become more vulnerable to heat stress," he said. "Therefore, it behooves dairy farmers to utilize evaporative cooling systems to reduce the effects of heat stress on their animals."

#### To Scout Your Alfalfa For Potato Leafhopper

Growers should strive to carefully manage alfalfa to reduce injury from potato leafhopper. Scouting for potato leafhopper is an easy and reliable way to prevent serious injury. To protect your alfalfa crop from damage, you need to monitor the situation in your fields.

Waiting until yellowing or "hopper burn" is evident is too late. Damage will have already occurred. In a square-shaped field, monitor in a "U"-shaped pattern. In a rectangular field, an "I"-shaped pattern is the best. In each field, select five sample sites along the "U" or "I" shape.

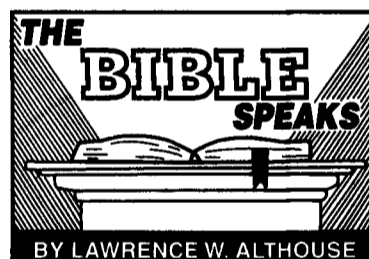
Use an insect net with a 15-inch diameter hoop and a tightly knit bag such as muslin. Within each of the five sample sites make 20 sweeps with the net while walking in a zig-zag pattern. Don't stop swinging the net until each of the 20 sweeps is completed. Sweep the net about 3-4 inches below the tops of the plants.

A number of factors need to be considered when determining if spraying to control the leafhopper population is justified. A publication entitled "A Pest Management Program for Alfalfa in Pennsylvania" is available from your county extension office. Consult the charts in this publication for assistance in determining the economic threshold for your alfalfa crop.

#### Quote Of The Week:

"The person who cannot see the ultimate becomes a slave to the immediate."

— Unknown



BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE

### WHEN WE UNDERSTAND

Background Scripture:  
Nehemiah 8.

Devotional Reading:  
Psalms 119:33-40.

"So the wall was finished" (6:15). Through perseverance and the leadership of Nehemiah, the great task thought impossible by their neighbors was completed.

Their neighbors did not share their joy, "for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God" (16b). So this good work achieved also the grudging respect of their enemies for the greatness of the Jewish God.

Actually, this moment of victory was also one of great risk, for now that the good work was completed, what would hold the Jews together? Would they retain their commitment to the Lord, or would they rest secure behind their walls? There is always the danger of dissolution once the project has been completed.

The key is to make the end of the project the beginning of an even higher commitment to God. In a sense, the good work helps us to see that we need each other to accom-

plish the challenges to which God submits us. The good work is not the end of our commitment to God, but simply a jumping-off place to a higher level.

#### Return To The Law

For the Jews, the end of building the walls of Jerusalem became the beginning of their return to the law which was their spiritual and national heritage. Presumably, they had forgotten or neglected the law during the exilic and postexilic periods. But now, recognizing that it was God who enabled them to do what no one thought they could, they called upon Ezra to publicly read the law so they could hear it read for themselves.

From that day forward, the law would again become a central focus of Judaism. But the people wanted to live by the law of God so that they might do his will. They wanted to express it in their daily lives. When Jesus came preaching and teaching, he challenged people to do the same thing, proclaiming the coming of the kingdom of God, the rule of God on earth through the commitment and lives of his children.

"And they read from the book... clearly; and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading" (8:8). The law was written in Hebrew — but Hebrew, like the law, had long been forgotten by most of the Jews who now spoke Aramaic (not Arabic!). Fortunately, some still understood Hebrew and they translated the law into the common tongue so all could understand it. Although today we read from English translations of the Bible, we, too, often need someone to explain to us what various passages may mean. Some passages are easy to understand — others can be quite difficult.

#### All The People Wept

When the people understood what was being read, they had a significant reaction: "For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law" (8:9). Why weep? Because, once they understood of what God required of them, they were struck with a sense of judgment and guilt in his eyes. The law led them to see how far short of God's will they were living. Thus, they repented, just as Jesus called people to repent when he preached to them the good news of God.

Most, if not all of us, live fairly respectable lives. Being "respectable" can pale when we read the beatitudes or the Sermon on the Mount and, in a rare moment of understanding, see the radically different life to which Christ calls us. We too are struck with the realization of how tragically far short we fall. The gap between what the gospel demands of us and what we deliver is much greater than the Grand Canyon.

Although repentance is a natural response to a deeper understanding of God's will for us, we need to make a transition from guilt to glory. When Ezra observed the tears of the people, they said to them: "Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (8:10). Our guilt is to be overcome with joy in God's grace and in sharing our plenitude with those "for whom nothing is prepared." — your neighbor in need.

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—by—

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### Lancaster Farming

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