

Lancaster Farming

OPINION

At Long Last, A History Of A Great Department

We learned late last week that Penn State has recently completed a history of the Dairy and Animal Science Department and is making the story available online at www.das.psu.edu/history.

The product of a committee of seven emeritus faculty, the history describes the origins of animal research and extension activities at Penn State, when Dr. Henry Armsby became director of the Agricultural Experiment Station in 1887. The story continues to the present day, highlighting the many achievements in research, extension, and education; the evolution of the department; and the many people that made it all happen.

In the introduction to the history, Department Head Terry D. Etherton writes, "I invite you to read about the long and storied history of the Department of Dairy and Animal Science. The origins of the present-day department date back to 1887! As you can imagine, since the first days of the university and department, much has happened, and thousands of individuals have passed through the gates of "Dear Old State." We in the department think it is important to share this wonderful legacy with you! I think you will be amazed at the impact our people and programs have had.

"The impetus for this project was the recognition that we did not have a written history of the department. As is always the case, as events and time move ahead, what has happened in the past can fade away. I think it is invaluable to have a written history of the department to provide a foundation for our successors to appreciate the "lives and times" of so many who have been "touched" by the department."

Etherton noted the idea to develop a history of the department was shared with some former faculty who launched the effort. This group (Don Ace, chair; Lester Burdette, Bob Cowan, Tom Merritt, Grant Sherritt, Larry Specht, and John Zeigler) "did a marvelous job of exploring the many, many documents and photos dispersed around campus. They worked hard to capture the history of the department. There are many entertaining stories they can share about "digging" out historical information that resides in the university archives. My observation is that they had much fun, and I am very, very appreciative of their dedication and hard work."

Let us (and Penn State) know what you think. We can be reached via e-mail at farming@lancasterfarming.com. Etherton can be reached at tetherton@psu.edu.



Now Is The Time
By Leon Ressler
Lancaster County Extension Director

To Manage Harvest Of Wind-Damaged Corn

The wind damage caused by Tropical Storm Isabel has significantly disrupted corn silage harvest in the areas that were impacted by the storm. This has especially impacted farms who normally harvest with horses and binders who now need to wait on a custom chopper since their normal equipment cannot handle the badly damaged crop.

This means that there are many more farmers this year waiting for custom harvest services than in past years. The net result is many farmers are not all going to be able to harvest their crop at desirable moisture levels. This is combined with the challenges of extra mold inoculum in the fields because of the wet growing season and unusually high amounts of soil contamination in the harvested silage.

In order to minimize quality problems, there are a number of things farmers should keep in mind. Dr. Limin Kung Jr., professor of ruminant nutrition and microbiology at the University of Delaware, is an expert in the fermentation process and shares the following insights on dealing with this storm-damaged crop.

If you are forced to harvest the crop too wet because of the availability of harvesting equipment, no inocu-

plants are recommended. You will have problems with seepage, but you are still likely to have reasonably good fermentation without the use of inoculants. If it is possible, it would be better to allow the custom harvester to move on to other farms and return later when your crop has dried to better moisture levels.

Harvesting the silage after it is too dry (less than 60 percent moisture) is a bigger problem. The number one problem under this scenario is to get the silage to pack well enough to allow for fermentation. In order to do this, one needs to chop the corn to a finer particle size. Under good conditions a particle size of 3/4 inch is normally recommended. However, if the silage is too dry, Kung recommends a particle length of 1/2 inch. While this will lead to other challenges with rumen function, he believes the most important problem to solve is getting fermentation.

Under these conditions, farmers should apply an inoculant of *Lactobacillus buchneri* bacteria which will help control mold growth. This is fairly new inoculant and is available from Pioneer and Renaissance Nutrition. This inoculant promotes the rapid development of lactic acid in the fermentation process. The other alternative is to use buffered propionic acid. Propionic acid is less available, harder to apply, and is likely to be more costly than using the *Lactobacillus buchneri* inoculant.

To Be Safe Around Silo Gas

Each year at silo filling time comes the danger of silo gas. This threat has been around since the first use of silos and it is easy to take shortcuts or become complacent about the dangers associated with silo filling. The fact that many have worked around this for years without a problem contributes to not taking this seriously. However, a simple mistake could cost you your life, so take the time to use adequate precautions.

Those who normally fill their silos with a binder over a longer period of time will learn that silos filled quickly with a chopper produce gas rapidly after the silo is full. Under these circumstances, you may have much more gas to deal with than what you are used to seeing.

Silo gas is formed by the natural fermentation of chopped forages in the silo. Several gases are formed and the type of silo the forage is stored in

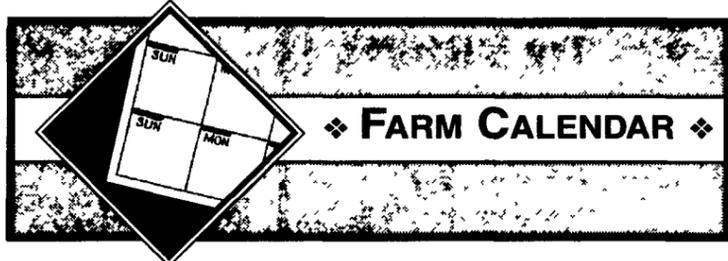
determines the amount of different gases. In a conventional or open-top silo, nitrogen dioxide is the major gas formed. This gas is characterized by a strong bleach-like odor and low-lying yellow, red, or dark-brown fumes. It reaches a peak about three days after filling and quickly begins to decrease shortly thereafter, especially if the silo is ventilated. After two weeks it is unlikely that any more gas will be formed, but some could still be present if it was trapped and unable to escape the silo.

Nitrogen dioxide is dangerous because it causes severe irritation to the nose and throat and could cause inflammation of the lungs. It is especially dangerous because low-level exposure is often accompanied by only slight irritation or pain. Although death can occur immediately, a farmer could breathe the gas without any immediate serious symptoms and then die in his sleep hours later from fluid collecting in his lungs. Many victims have relapses one to two weeks after the initial exposure with symptoms similar to pneumonia. If you are exposed to the gas, it is critical that you seek medical attention!

Ideally, everyone should avoid the silo during the critical period when gases are forming. Since this is not always possible, it is best to use a self-contained breathing apparatus when entering during the danger period. This is the only breathing device that is certain to protect you from all silo gases. Dust masks or even chemical cartridge respirators do not provide sufficient protection and are not intended to be used where gases are extremely toxic or where the air has been replaced by gases such as carbon dioxide.

If you do not have access to a self-contained breathing device, it is possible to enter the silo safely if the following precautions are followed. First ventilate the silo and adjacent areas by running the blower 15-20 minutes before entering. All doors should be opened down to the level of the settled silage and the windows in the feed room should be opened. Leave the blower running the entire time you are inside. Never enter the silo unless another adult is present who can go for help if needed. This person should maintain visual contact with you. Although it will not protect you from silo gases, wear a

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FARM CALENDAR

Saturday, October 4

- Pa. Make It Yourself With Wool Contest, (814) 443-3189.
- Central Pa. Woodland Management Workshop, Cambria County Extension, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., (814) 472-7986.
- Pa. Graded Cattle Sale, Indian Farmers' Livestock Market, Homer City, 7 p.m., (724) 397-4087.
- 3rd Annual Alpaca Heritage Sale, Brumm's Lullaby Farm, Fountainville, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., (215) 345-4804.
- Pa. Angus on Parade, Farm Show Complex, 2 p.m., (540) 337-3001.
- National Apple Harvest Festival, Arendtsville, Adams County, thru Oct. 5, 8 a.m.-6 p.m., (717) 677-9413.

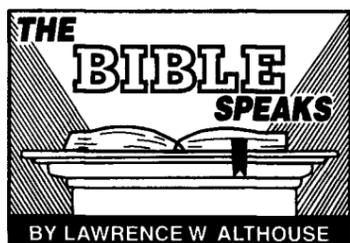
Sunday, October 5

- Fall Fest and Harvest Day, Lings Gap Environmental Education Center, Huntsdale, 1 p.m.-5 p.m.
- Fall Horse Show for Riders with Disabilities, Thorncroft Therapeutic Riding, Malvern, (610) 644-1963.
- Central Susquehanna Land Owners' Chain Saw Safety and Technique, Martynowych Property, near Danville, (570) 784-8490.
- Open Gate Farm Tour, Northampton County, noon-5 p.m., (610) 746-1970.
- Coast Day at University of Delaware, Hugh R. Shays Campus, Lewes, Delaware, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.
- National 4-H Week thru Oct. 11.

Monday, October 6

- Holidaysburg Community Fair, thru Oct. 9.
- Manheim Community Farm Show, thru Oct. 10.
- Western Pa. Turfgrass Golf Tournament, Pittsburgh Field Club, Pittsburgh, (412) 855-6702.
- Dairy Hedging Workshop, Acorn Farms, Rt. 283 and 772, 7 p.m.-10 p.m. also Oct. 7, Holiday Inn, Grantville, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m., (814) 865-0469.
- USDA Conference on Survival Strategies for Small Farmers,

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BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE

AIM AT HEAVEN

Background Scripture:
1 Peter 1:1 through 2:10.
Devotional Reading:
Leviticus 19:1-10.

On Sunday mornings, churches in Britain and Europe are inhabited by congregations continually diminishing in size. In the U.S., while there are some "megachurches" to the contrary, generally church membership and attendance are declining.

For many people this has produced, if not a loss of faith, at least a greatly diminished hope — this in a world where war, poverty, economic recession, and ecological disasters have been joined by stifling materialism and appalling selfishness.

In "The Family Reunion," T.S. Eliot writes:

*You do not know what hope is, until you have lost it.
You only know what it is not to hope;
You do not know what it is to have hope taken from you,
Or to fling it away, to join the legion of the hopeless.*

Legion Of The Hopeless

Overwhelmed by a world that, for all of our technological wizardry, becomes more and more unmanageable, many people are silently joining "the legion of the hopeless." Nothing seems to work to achieve what it promises, and every new solution is eclipsed by a new and more ominous crisis.

Many Christians are alarmed at the growth of Islam, but to me, the most alarming portent is not the growth of other religions but the loss of Christian vitality. People are not rushing to join churches where there seems to be no more genuine hope than elsewhere. If we were offering and living the Christian hope, our church rolls would not be diminishing. "They" are not the problem; "we" are.

One of the great appeals of primitive Christianity was the "living hope" to which 1 Peter 1:3 tells us all Christians are "born anew." What is "a living hope"? Just as "living waters" are those that flow from a perennial spring, so a living hope is one that neither trials, tribulations, nor crises can destroy or take from us, because our hope is based upon the resurrection — which was not just about how Jesus conquered death on a cross, but how Christians are resurrected from defeat to victory in that very same power.

A Living Hope

Sooner or later everything in this world upon which we bank our hope

will perish. You can't even "go home again," because "home" is always caught up in change, too. If, however, we put our trust in the "living hope" of Christ's gospel, we have, as 1 Peter puts it, "an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading" (1:3,4).

Our life in Jesus Christ is forward-looking in that the greater part is yet to come. As Prof. Elmer G. Homrighausen put it, "Early Christians were characterized by the spirit of triumph. Their worship and work were done in the spirit of joy and anticipation. They were already 'raised with Christ.'" So are we!

Our faith, although it is in what is yet to come, also has ramifications for where we are right now. So, "set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:13). But we do not wait for that day idly, for "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct..." (1:14,15).

C.S. Lewis reminds us that "... Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next... Aim at Heaven and you will get earth "thrown in"; aim at earth and you will get neither."

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How To Reach Us

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