

Lancaster Farming

OPINION

Agroterrorism In Pa.: How Real Is Threat?

A few organizations believe we may be overlooking — or the least, becoming too complacent about — threats from bioterrorism.

The thinking goes: it's not a question of *whether* herds could be infected with foot and mouth disease (FMD) or bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE, sometimes called "mad cow disease"), but *when*.

Lancaster Farming reported in the Aug. 30 issue about the trouble the state diagnostic laboratories could face if FMD or BSE infected state herds, and the labs' almost incredible lack of funding.

On Tuesday, the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association (PNA) Foundation addressed bioterror threats, hearing from Margaret Potter, a member of Pennsylvania's Bioterrorism Preparedness Council. PNA members also heard an expert on infectious disease outbreaks, from SARS to West Nile Virus — Dr. Lee Harrison, head of the infectious diseases epidemiology research unit at the University of Pittsburgh.

According to Penn State, greater resources are needed to prevent and respond to potential terrorist attacks against Pennsylvania agriculture. Recently, a group of Penn State faculty experts and administrators spoke to state legislators about these threats. This investment in resources also would contribute to agricultural efficiency and profitability by increasing security against naturally occurring or unintentionally introduced biological threats, according to the group.

Among those testifying at the Aug. 21 hearing on agroterrorism before the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Response Committee were Robert Steele, dean of Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences; Bruce McPheron, the college's associate dean for research and graduate education; Bhushan Jayarao, assistant professor of veterinary science; Frederick Gildow, professor of plant pathology; and David Filson, Penn State Cooperative Extension emergency response coordinator and director of extension's South Central Region.

"It is important that we have intervention programs in place to deal with acute episodes," Steele testified. "More important, however, is to have longer range programs in place that are more preventative. Prevention is far more effective and less costly in the long run than is intervention."

"We at Penn State and the College of Agricultural Sciences have cutting-edge capability in both intervention and preventative aspects of agricultural security," he continued. "However, more resources are required to ramp up these efforts so that our discovery research, education and technology transfer capacity can match the pace required of these efforts."

Jayarao told the committee that the introduction of foreign animal diseases into the U.S. could be devastating to Pennsylvania's food system.

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FARM CALENDAR

- Saturday, October 18
- Rites of Fall, U.S. Botanical Gardens, Ag Center, Gettysburg, (717) 334-6271.
 - Growing and Using Garlic, Lebanon Valley Ag Center, 10 a.m.-noon, (717) 270-4391.
 - Fall Lawn Care, Bradford County Master Gardeners, Demo Garden, Extension Office, Towanda, 6:30 p.m.
 - Pa. Graded Feeder Cattle Sale, Bedford Cattleman's Assoc., Bedford County Fairgrounds, Bedford, 1 p.m., (814) 623-2321.
 - Pa. Graded Feeder Cattle Sale, Westmoreland County Cattleman's Assoc., Westmoreland County Fairgrounds, Greensburg, 6:30 p.m., (724) 837-1402.
 - S. W. Pa. Forestry Field Trip to Burnham's Tree Farm and S. W. Woodland Owners' Assoc. Meeting, (724) 627-6624.
 - Fifth Annual Pun'kin Chunkin' and Fall Festival, York Expo Center, noon-5 p.m., (717) 843-4411.
 - Hay Processing Field Day, David Fink, Heidel Hollow Farm, Germantown, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., (610) 767-2409.
 - S. W. Pa. Tillage Manure Handling Field Day, Diamond Farms, Smithfield, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., (724) 438-0111.
 - Manor FFA Tractor Pull at River Heritage Day, Washington Boro Community Park, (717) 285-0763.
 - Maryland Horse Pasture Walk, Van-Brunt farm near New Windsor,

- 9:30 a.m.-noon, (410) 313-2707. Workshop on Painted Floorcloths, Schaefferstown Brendle Museum, 1 p.m.-4 p.m., (717) 949-2244.
- Sunday, October 19
- York County Pun'kin Chunkin Event, York Expo Center, noon-5 p.m., (717) 843-4411.
 - Lehigh County Open Gate Farm Tour, 1 p.m.-5 p.m., (610) 391-9840.
- Monday, October 20
- Berks County Extension Annual meeting, Ag Center, Leesport, 6:30 p.m., (610) 378-1327.
 - Beaver County Pesticide Update Meeting, Beaver County Ag and Environmental Education Center, Beaver, 7:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m., (724) 774-3003.
 - Little Wiconisco Creek Study, Berks County Community Center, 7 p.m.-8:30 p.m., or Oct. 23, same location, 10:30 a.m.-1 p.m., both for agricultural residents. Oct. 23, Grace United Methodist Church, Medical Road, Millersburg, 7 p.m.-8:30 p.m.
 - Horse Pasture Management Seminar, York County Annex, 7 p.m.-9 p.m., (717) 840-7408.
 - PASA Raw Milk Informational Meeting, Lancaster Farm and Home Center, 9 a.m.
 - Backyard Tree Fruit Meeting, Franklin County Extension Office, Chambersburg, 7 p.m., (717) 263-9226.

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Now Is The Time By Leon Ressler Lancaster County Extension Director

To Consider These Pointers If Using A Dairy Bull For Fall Breeding

Lancaster dairy agent Beth Grove offers these pointers if you are using a dairy bull this fall to breed cows on your farm.

First, make safety a priority. Dairy bulls are dangerous animals — many dairy farmers have been seriously injured or killed by an aggressive bull. Experienced bull handlers suggest using a nose ring on your farm bull with a short (2-foot) chain attached. The chain makes it hard for the bull to attack without stepping on the chain.

Second, make certain the bull is fertile with a breeding soundness exam performed by your veterinarian. It is estimated that 10-15 percent of bulls are poorly fertile.

Third, be aware that disease can be a problem with herd bulls — vibriosis and trichomonosis are both spread by natural service. These diseases can cause low fertility and long days open in a herd of cows, as well as abortion or chronic infection. When buying a bull, be sure it is blood tested for BVD and has been

vaccinated for IBR, BVD, BRSV, PI3, and leptos.

Be sure to properly feed your bull. Ideally, a bull should receive a ration similar to that of the dry cows in the herd. Bulls that receive a high-energy ration may develop lameness and often become overweight and lazy.

It is important to rotate young bulls through the herd often, with the idea of not getting too many heifer calves from one particular sire. If the bull's genes for milk production are poor, you don't want to end up milking 30 of his daughters!

Finally, if you are considering whether to use a herd bull or keep the herd bull on your farm, remember the genetic disadvantages to using a natural service bull. A 2002 study from the USDA-AIPL compared DHIA production between daughters sired by proven bulls and daughters of natural service bulls in herds across the country. They found that AI daughters averaged about 970 pounds more milk per lactation than daughters of herd bulls.

To Be Aware Of The Historical Significance Of This Year's Weather

If there was any doubt, Tropical Storm Isabel washed it away — 2003 will go down in history as the wettest year on record for most of Pennsylvania, according to a precipitation expert in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

"It started raining last October and it really hasn't stopped," said Bryan Swistock, a water resources specialist with Penn State Cooperative Extension. "We got into a weather pattern where storms moving from the south up along the coast brought lots of moisture to Pennsylvania, and it looks like it is continuing."

After five years of prolonged drought that left groundwater levels at historic lows in the southeastern part of the Keystone State, the turnaround has been sudden, dramatic, and complete. Streams and rivers are running bank full, reservoirs are overflowing, and groundwater across the state has been fully recharged. Many farmers went from consecutive years of crop loss because of lack of moisture to struggling to find periods

dry enough to put equipment on their fields to plant, tend, and harvest their crops.

"The four-month period of May through August was by far the wettest ever recorded in all of Pennsylvania, with 23 inches of rain falling — close to 2 inches more than we ever had during that period," Swistock said. "Most parts of the state have already received 35 inches for the year."

While Isabel did not bring nearly as much rain to the Northeast as was expected, she reminded weather forecasters of another infamous woman in Pennsylvania's past.

"This won't go down as the wettest summer ever for the southeastern part of the state," said State Climatologist Paul Knight, an instructor in Penn State's College of Earth and Mineral Sciences. "In 1972, Hurricane Agnes dumped 16 inches of rain on southeastern counties. For that region, that year's precipitation record might never be eclipsed."

So what is causing these deluges? "I don't know whether you can attribute them to anything," Swistock said. "It is just the weather pattern we have been in since last fall. We really don't know why it has happened."

Knight suspects the cause of the weather pattern has something to do with water temperatures in the North Atlantic or the northern Pacific Ocean. "Let's look at this weather pattern in context," he explained. "It has wiped out the drought that existed in the southeastern United States, too. The whole eastern part of the country has changed from hot and dry to cool and wet. We don't yet understand the mechanism that would cause a change of this magnitude. We are still learning about how that works."

For years, Knight noted, a lot of weather patterns have been attributed to water temperature changes in the South Pacific. But this is different. "There have been no significant changes in the South Pacific," he said. "It is not related to El Nino or La Nina."

Quote Of The Week:
"One man with courage makes a majority."

— Andrew Jackson

THE BIBLE SPEAKS
BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE

AN ADVANCED COURSE

Background Scripture:
2 Peter 2:1.
Devotional Reading:
Ephesians 3:14-21.

A seminary professor is said to have advised a colleague to list his course in the seminary catalog as "an advanced course."

"Why would I do that?" his colleague replied. "It's a beginner's course."

"Yes," replied the professor, "but I've found that no one ever wants to admit that they need a beginner's course. Everyone wants to think of themselves as 'advanced.' Besides," he continued, "the only difference between the beginner's and advanced courses is that, in the advanced course, we simply try to get the students to apply what they learned in the beginner's course."

I don't know if that reasoning would apply to all academic subjects, but I believe it applies to Christian nurturing and growth. The advanced course in Christian discipleship is nothing more than applying what we learn in the beginner's course.

In Christian discipleship the beginner's course is learning to know Jesus not as an idea, but as a person-

al reality. If we can come to the point where we can say that we have a pretty good grasp of who Jesus was and what he was all about, we will have learned enough to meet practically all the problems, concerns, and challenges that come to us in life.

All Things

As the writer of 2 Peter says, "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence..." (1:3). To gain "knowledge" of Jesus is to gain knowledge for the living of a full and fruitful life. When we get to know Jesus, 2 Peter says that we "become partakers of the divine nature" (1:4). It is not that Jesus lays down rules and regulations for us to follow, but an example from his own life that we can make our own.

Obviously this doesn't all happen at once. Rather, it is a matter of growth as a disciple of Jesus. Conversion to Jesus Christ must be followed by growth after the example of Jesus. That is how we "become partakers of the divine nature." Sometimes it is a great leap forward, followed by a period of shuffling and stumbling along.

All of this is a part of Christian nurturing. And what is the aim of this Christian growth, nurturing, and education? It is not to learn things about Jesus so much as it is to learn to be like him as much as we can. If there were a final examination for any course in Christian discipleship, it would not ask us to recite a creed, explain a doctrine, or to give scriptural facts and figures.

Lancaster Farming

An Award-Winning Farm Newspaper

- PDA Friend of Agriculture Award, 2003
- Keystone Awards 1993, 1995
- PACD Media Award 1996
- Recognized for photo excellence throughout the years by the Northeast Farm Communicators
- PennAg Industries 1992
- Berks Ag-Business Council 2000

Growing Toward Love

When 2 Peter speaks of making "every effort to supplement your faith..." his use of the word "faith" does not mean a body of knowledge in the mind, an accumulation of things the disciple has learned about Jesus. The "faith" he speaks of is the trusting relationship between believer and Lord that produces the life of a disciple: "...supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love" (1:5).

We may learn all about Jesus Christ, but if we have not grown into following him, we are still in the beginner's course.

Understanding the creeds, doctrines, and theologies of Christianity may be beyond the intellectual reach of many would-be disciples, but understanding the kind of life Jesus calls us to live is within our grasp. We know all about his life and the example he set, but confronted by the challenges of daily living, we tend to forget what we know. We need to be reminded.

As 2 Peter says it: "Therefore I intend always to remind you of these things, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have... And I will see to it that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things" 1:12-15. Through a routine of prayer, study, corporate worship, and Christian education, we are constantly reminded of what we already know.

So, have you graduated yet to an advanced course?

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