

# Lancaster Farming

## OPINION

### Decision Sets Dangerous Precedent

The Lancaster Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Agriculture Committee recently launched a letter-writing campaign voicing its grave concern regarding the recent denial decision made by USDA's Farm Service Agency with reference to Farm Ownership and Farm Operating Assistance funding for a Delta-based farm.

The Chamber is concerned the decision sets a dangerous precedent for farms and agribusinesses that would compromise their ability to operate in the region.

The farm, owned and operated by Craig Metzler, was denied funding after initial approval for a proposed hog expansion following a fairly public outcry from residents in an adjacent housing development that such an operation would create odors and property value would decline. Located in an area that permits agricultural uses, the farm met all applicable regulations that are associated with intensive animal operations.

However, in the rejection letter sent to Metzler on Aug. 25, the agency appears to base its change of the original decision on the possibility of nuisance lawsuits from the neighboring residents and the agency's possible liability in such a suit, stating "With the close proximity of the proposed action site to neighboring homes, the potential for complaints and nuisance lawsuits about odor are very likely."

While the decision was directed at one particular farmer, The Chamber believes it sets a very bad precedent by the Farm Service Agency for every farmer and anyone involved in the agriculture industry in the nation. In its template letter, distributed to all agriculture-related Chamber members, The Chamber cited the danger of such a change in decision to the entire industry and the lack of leadership demonstrated by the USDA in allowing such a decision to take place.

The chamber will continue to monitor this situation, and lend its support where appropriate to ensure farms and agriculture-related businesses can operate in an environment where they can thrive.

— Reprinted from the Lancaster Chamber News November 2003

◆ FARM CALENDAR ◆

Saturday, November 22  
Susquehanna County Farm-City Feast, Mountain View High School, 7:30 p.m., (717) 278-1158.

Workshop: Celebrating Holidays in Fraktur Tradition, Schaeferstown Brendle Museum, 10 a.m.-noon, (717) 949-2244.

Mercer County Holstein Annual Meeting, Hempfield Fire Hall, Greenville, 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, November 23  
Custom Operators Workshop, Franklin County Extension, Lighthouse Restaurant, Chambersburg, 7 p.m.-9 p.m., (717) 263-9226.

Introduction to Spreadsheets, Lebanon County Extension Center, thru Nov. 25, 9:30

**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@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.

a.m.-3 p.m., (717) 240-6500.  
Monday, November 24

Lancaster Chamber's Ag Industry Banquet, Willow Valley Resort, 5 p.m., (717) 397-3531.

Custom Operation Workshop, Lighthouse Restaurant, Chambersburg, 7 p.m.-9 p.m., (717) 263-9226.

Introduction to Spreadsheets, Lebanon County Extension Center, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m., thru Nov. 25, (717) 240-6500.

PDMP Producer Discussion Forum, Lancaster Comfort Inn, Sherwood Knoll, 11:45 a.m.-2 p.m., 1 (888) 373-7232.

Tuesday, November 25  
PDMP Producer Discussion Forum, Lighthouse Restaurant Banquet Center, Chambersburg, 11:45 a.m.-2 p.m., 1 (888) 373-1232.

Dairy Cattle Reproductive Management and Workshop, Lighthouse Restaurant, Chambersburg, 9:15 a.m.-2:45 p.m., (717) 263-9226.

Thursday, November 27  
Happy Thanksgiving! Lancaster Farming office closed.

Monday, December 1  
Horse Pasture Management, York County 4-H Center, 7 p.m.-9 p.m., (717) 840-7408.  
Tilling the Soil of Opportunity,

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

**To Give Thanks**  
Thanksgiving is a very special time of the year when we gather with family and friends to give thanks for the many blessings we enjoy. While some may have had more difficulties than others this past year, we all have things for which we can be thankful.

When I was a teen-ager, the adviser to our church's youth group reminded us several times that no matter how difficult we think our situation is, we can always find people who have a more difficult situation than we do. Since I spent six years working on a mission project in Africa, it is easy for me to remember that truth.

The Thanksgiving holiday is a special opportunity to teach our children to be grateful for all they have and to remember those who are needy. Donating our time and resources to others by assisting with the work of an inner-city rescue mission, for example, is a great way to show gratitude. We also can establish other family traditions re-

lated to this holiday that will create warm memories our children will take with them for the rest of their lives.

The special holiday to celebrate Thanksgiving has a long history in our country. While not well known, the first Thanksgiving celebrated in the New World was not at Plymouth Rock but at the Berkley Plantation along the James River in Virginia on Dec. 4, 1619. It wasn't until two years later in the fall of 1621 that the Pilgrims conducted their first Thanksgiving at the colony at Plymouth. The pilgrims arrived in November of 1620 and endured a brutal winter. Only 50 out of 110 survived the first winter. After a good harvest in the fall of 1621 they had a Thanksgiving feast.

There are only two first-person accounts of the pilgrim's first Thanksgiving. One of them is Edward Winslow's account, which he wrote in a letter dated Dec. 12, 1621. The complete letter can be found in "Mourt's Relation: A Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth."

As President, George Washington issued a proclamation in 1789 naming Nov. 26 as a national day of thanks. In 1863 President Lincoln proclaimed that the last Thursday of November be set aside as a day "of Thanksgiving and praise to our beneficial Father." During the next 75 years, each president followed Lincoln by proclaiming a day each year for this purpose. In 1939 President Roosevelt set the date as the fourth Thursday of November, and this continued until 1941 when the U.S. Congress made the fourth Thursday of November the national holiday known as Thanksgiving.

**To Attend Cattleman's College**  
Beef producers have an opportunity to learn about improving cattle reproduction at Cattleman's College Dec. 13 at Toftrees Resort and Conference Center in State College.

Topics for the morning session include "Understanding Basic Cow Reproduction," "Impacts of Nutrition On Cow Reproduction," "Selecting the Calving Season," and a "Review of Estrus Synchronization Methods."

Topics for the afternoon session include "A Review of Semen Handling," "Results of Using CIDRs," "Evaluating Reproductive Fitness In Bulls — The BSE," "Bull-To-Cow Ratios," and "Herd Biosecurity and Bull Leases."

For more information, call John Comerford at (814) 863-3661 (e-mail jxc16@psu.edu) or call Dr. Dan Kniffen at (814) 865-7809 (e-mail dkniffen@psu.edu).

**Quote Of The Week:**  
"Our corn (that is, wheat) did prove well, and God be praised, we had a good increase of Indian corn, and our barley indifferently good, but our peas not worth the gathering, for we feared they were too late sown. They came up very well, and blossomed, but the sun parched them in the blossom. Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together after we had gathered the fruit of our labors. They four in one day killed as much fowl as, with a little help beside, served the company almost a week. At which time, amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest king Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation and bestowed on our governor, and upon the captain and others. And although it be not always so plentiful as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want that we often wish you partakers of our plenty."  
— Edward Winslow  
December 12, 1621

**THE BIBLE SPEAKS**  
BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE

### 'BIG WHEELS' AND LITTLE CHURCHES

**Background Scripture:** 2 and 3 John.  
**Devotional Reading:** John 15:1-8.

It is understandable that you might read the three epistles of John and conclude that they are pretty much alike, both in style and content. But, if you examine all three, you discover that, despite some similar concerns, there are also significant differences.

For example, 1 John is written probably to a group of churches, while 2 John is written to one church which John the Elder addresses as "the elect lady." On the other hand, 3 John is written to one person, Gaius.

The first two epistles are concerned with heresy or false teaching, whereas the third epistle is concerned with a local leader, Diotrephes, who is dominating a particular church and resisting the Elder's authority.

In 2 John we are concerned with itinerating teachers who are attempting to sway the local church to adopt doctrines that would pervert its Christ-centered basis. The Elder appeals to the church not to open the church to their influence.

In 3 John, however, we have a situation, which is quite the obverse: Diotrephes is refusing hospitality to itinerant teachers and the Elder is urging Gaius to provide these teachers with the hospitality that Diotrephes is withholding.

**No Longer Christianity**  
One might conclude that 2 and 3 John have little or nothing to do with current Christian experience. When these letters were written, preachers and teachers itinerating among the various churches was a normal experience of the church. The church profited spiritually from many of these itinerants. There were some of these men, however, whose teaching was so contrary to Christian teaching so that it was no longer Christian.

The latter, who promoted themselves as "advanced Christians," were Gnostics who taught that the created physical world, including the human body, is evil. Therefore Gnostics denied the incarnation and some Docetist Gnostics claimed that Jesus had no physical body, but only appeared to do so.

What do these two epistles have to say to us today? First, even though the Elder regarded these people as dangerously teachers, he did not counsel the church to persecute or attack them. He simply didn't want them permitted to use their facilities. He opposed their teaching and closed the church to them, but he did not respond with violent words or actions.

Since then, however, churches have often risen violently against those with whom they disagreed. Today, many of the conflicts within and between denominations are carried on in a rancorous spirit. Violence does not protect the faith; it only harms it.

**'Big Wheels'**  
Secondly, we find even more relevance in the background to 3 John. Diotrephes is not unlike the "big wheels" many of us have experienced in various congregations. These self-important people can keep a congregation "small" if not in numbers, at least in stature. All churches need leadership and in numerically small churches, leadership may be in short supply, but no church ever flourishes under the willful hand of an officious man or woman who glories in the power that he or she can accumulate.

Worst of all, these people generally do not see themselves the way others do. They see themselves as exemplary Christians, little realizing how harmful their example can be.

Often this happens in a church where the rest of the membership is unwilling to prevent such a person for taking and maintaining harmful control. These power-driven people gravitate to leadership vacuums which are created by a "Let-George-Do-It" attitude on the part of others. These Diotrephes rise to virtually absolute power only when and where they are permitted to do so.

Reigning in a Diotrephes is not contrary to the Elder's admonition: "that we love one another..." (2 John 5,6). Permitting a Diotrephes to dominate a congregation is not love, but indifference to the mission and purpose of the church. "Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. He who does good is of God" (3 John 11).

**Lancaster Farming**  
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