

Farmland

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Act, enacted in August, 1981, a minimum of 500 acres of farmland within a township is necessary for an agricultural zone to be formed. The farmland parcels do not need to be adjoining, as long as at least a total of 500 acres is involved.

Protected agricultural land may not be condemned or taken by eminent domain by the local, county or state government for any reason. The agricultural security designation lasts for seven years; at the end of this time landowners may either renew the classification or resign from the program.

Hillside Farm

Hillside Farm, owned by the Conyngham family for more than a century, has participated in the program since its inception, according to William L. Conyngham. Its 450 acres are divided evenly between Kingston and Jackson Townships; the entire Jackson Township parcel is part of the security area.

"We raise registered Holstein cattle and have about 75 milking cows and 75 younger ones," Conyngham said. "Hillside Farm's cattle have won production awards and cattle competition prizes. Our bloodline is known both nationally and internationally."

Hillside Farm is also well-known throughout the area for the delicious ice cream and other products available at its dairy store on Hillside Road in the farm's Kingston Township section.

Conyngham said that he plans to continue with the agricultural security program because it protects his farm from interference with its normal operations. His sons are also active on the farm.

Windy Hill Farm

Operated by Mrs. Harold Ray, Windy Hill Farm is also part of the program and has been in the family for more than a century. Her husband's grandfather bought it in 1897 when he was 19 years old.

"Windy Hill is a tree farm. I raise dwarf conifers such as hemlock and different species of pine in areas of my land unsuitable for regular farming," Mrs. Ray explained.

"There have been too many takeovers of the old family farms in the Back Mountain," she continued. "The Agricultural Security Act gives us a chance to protect what we have. It has stopped the carving up of old, open lands which has destroyed what we were, what we had. Our old buildings and one-room schoolhouses are all gone now."

Preserving farmland

Establishing an agricultural security zone of at least 500 acres within one municipality is only one way to preserve farmland from subdivision, condemnation or acquisition by public domain.

Under Act 149, the Farmland Preservation Program in effect since 1989, farmers can sell their farms' development rights to the state, which places a permanent deed restriction on the land.

The farmer still owns and works the farm and may sell it if he wishes to, but the permanent deed restriction prevents the land from being developed or used for any activity other than farming.

For further information on either the Farmland Preservation Program or the Agricultural Security Act, contact Fred Wertz at the USDA Farmland Preservation Office, 2301 N. Cameron St., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9408, or call him at 717-783-8460.

"Selling a farm might be profitable, but nothing can compensate for the memories, the part of us that is in this land."

Mrs. Harold Ray
Windy Hill Farm

Manzonis join

The Manzoni brothers — Alfred, John and Francis — have also designated 265 acres of their century-old dairy farm as part of the agricultural security area.

"We have about 175 head of cattle and also raise corn, oats and hay for their feed," John Manzoni said. "Even though there isn't a lot of money in farming, our family is still interested in keeping it going."

Mrs. Ray, who is active on the Agricultural Area Advisory Committee, has noticed more farmers take an interest in the program, now that the first seven years are up and it's time for renewal.

"Preserving farmland helps us keep our roots in the area," she concluded. "Selling a farm might be profitable, but nothing can compensate for the memories, the part of us that is in this land."

Richardson named president of First Bank

Robert D. Richardson has been named President of First Bank, Pittston, one of eight Regional Banks within Commonwealth Bank. The announcement was made jointly by William D. Davis, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Commonwealth Bancshares Corporation and William E. Snell, Jr., President and Chief Operating Officer of Commonwealth Bancshares Corporation.

Richardson is well known within the northeastern Pennsylvania business and civic community. He brings 22 years of banking experience and an extensive commercial lending background to First Bank. He was formerly manager of the Commercial Banking Department at First Eastern Bank, N.A. and Executive Vice President of First Eastern Corporation.

William Snell said "We are very excited to have Bob join our team.

He is a seasoned banking executive with proven success in dealing with customers, fellow employees and the community. "Snell further added that, "his customer orientation and extensive knowledge of the area is a perfect fit with our 'close to the customer' service philosophy."

William Davis commented, "I am confident that Bob has the expertise needed to address the rapid change in our industry and the opportunities that exist in First Bank's market. During the last 22 years, he has served in a variety of corporate banking assignments which will prove invaluable as he leads First Bank forward."

Richardson remarked, "I am pleased to join First Bank and look forward to the opportunities ahead. First Bank is a strong, well-capitalized and highly profitable Regional Bank that continues to be a vital contributor to the Wyoming

Valley. I'm eager to work with Tom Burke, Chairman of First Bank, to strengthen the ties with our current customers and develop and expand new business throughout the region."

Richardson was graduated from Dickinson College, Carlisle, with a degree in economics. Additionally, he completed studies at the Stonier Graduate School of Banking at Rutgers University.

He is director of the Greater Wilkes-Barre Industrial Fund, director of the Pennsylvania Bankers Association-Central Atlantic School of Commercial Lending, President of the Dallas Fire and Ambulance, Inc., senior associate member of Robert Morris Associates, member of the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce, Westmoreland Club and Dallas Rotary Club.

Richardson, his wife, Sandra, and three children live in Dallas.



ROBERT D. RICHARDSON

Rabies

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the Game Commission. Even if no bite has occurred, saliva from a lick from a rabid animal can transmit the virus.

Warm-blooded animals, particularly mammals, are most susceptible to rabies, although occasional cases of rabies-infected raptors (birds of prey or carrion-eaters) have been documented by the Game Commission. Foxes, bats, skunks and raccoons are the most common rabies victims.

Because the disease has three different stages, infected animals will not always show the same symptoms, according to the Game Commission.

Animals in the first stage, furious rabies, will be extremely irritable and aggressive, while those in the second stage, dumb rabies, will act sluggish and may be partially paralyzed. Partial or extensive paralysis followed by death marks the final stage, paralytic rabies.

Healey added that many people mistakenly think that rabies outbreaks are weather-related. Although rabies cases are less common during the cold weather, people should be prepared for the deadly virus to strike at any time.

"Although treatment of rabies in humans has improved, the medication is still very expensive. Some health insurance plans do not cover the \$1,000 series of injections," Healey added.

Pennsylvania state law requires that all dogs and cats have a cur-

rent rabies vaccination, according to Ed Gross, manager of the Luzerne County SPCA.

Allowing pets to roam freely exposes them to rabies and other diseases such as parvovirus and distemper. It is also a violation of the statewide leash law, Gross said.

Good common sense is the best preventive for rabies, according to the Game Commission.

"Hikers and people out for nature walks in the woods must avoid all contact with wild animals," recommended Ted Vesloski of the Game Commission.

Even if a young wild animal appears to be alone, its mother is usually nearby and will return once humans have left. Touching a wild baby will imprint the human scent on it, and the mother will refuse to take care of it, he added.

Vesloski added that, although people's first instinct is to try to help a sick or injured animal, the animal's best interests will be served by allowing nature to take its course.

Illness is nature's way of controlling reproduction and strengthening animal populations.

"If a wild animal doesn't look or act wild, don't touch it," Vesloski advised.

The SPCA will offer a rabies vaccination clinic at its shelter in Plains Saturday, April 11, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Shots are \$5 each. Dogs must be on leashes and cats should be in carriers.

How to help prevent rabies

Rabies is a fatal virus affecting the central nervous system. Since its incubation period can last up to two or more weeks and the disease has many different symptoms, it is often difficult to know whether or not an animal has been infected just by looking at it. However, some very simple preventive measures can go a long way in protecting your family and pets.

- Make sure that all family pets have current vaccinations.
- Do not allow pets to roam freely.
- Never approach or handle a strange animal.
- Avoid handling young wildlife, even if the mother isn't nearby. The mother will return, once you leave the vicinity.
- If you notice a wild animal doing something very unusual, such as opossums or raccoons moving during the daytime, notify the nearest Game Commission office. If it doesn't act wild, don't touch it.
- Never handle any animal that appears to be sick.

What to do if you have been bitten

Even the best precautions can't always prevent unforeseen accidents, such as being bitten by an animal. The Pennsylvania Game Commission has provided some tips on what to do if a family member or a pet has been bitten by a strange animal.

- Contact a hospital emergency room, family doctor or your pet's veterinarian immediately.
- Thoroughly wash the wound with soap and water.
- Make every possible effort to secure the suspected animal without being bitten yourself. If you know the animal's owner, ask to see proof that it has a current rabies vaccination.
- If it is necessary to shoot the animal, do so quickly and humanely, but do not shoot it in the head. The only test for rabies is an examination of the suspected animal's brain.
- Wrap the suspected animal's body in two layers of plastic bags and keep it cold until it can be turned over to the Pennsylvania Department of Health. Do not freeze it. Be sure to wear rubber gloves.
- If a person has been bitten, report it to the Pennsylvania Department of Health at 826-3062.
- If an animal has been bitten, report it to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture at 388-2416.

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