

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE PASTURE

The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn. – Alvin Toffler

We live in a very fast paced era and the amount of information available is expanding faster than we can accommodate. I see two significant issues arising out of this accelerating pace of available information:

- As individuals we need to develop filters so that we can acquire the information we need without being overwhelmed by information that is not germane to our lives.
- As individuals we need to step back, relax and give ourselves a break from our rushed society. We need to set aside time to enjoy life, our four-footed friends and our human friends.

Solution: Attend the 2006 GALA Conference. See you there!

National Animal Identification System

Another case of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), aka “Mad Cow Disease” has been discovered in the United States. In my personal opinion more cases would be discovered if the USDA was more interested in the consumer rather than the producer. We are constantly being bombarded by news of the “bird flu”. Such news gives credence to the development of a National Animal Identification System. When Maine set up its Premises ID program I immediately registered our farm. Since then I have been dismayed by the prospect of the animal identification database being turned over to private entities. This raises a number of privacy and economic issues.

A big concern is the economic impact of the program on small farms, particularly where the implementation of the program is in the hands of those closely tied to agribusiness. With increasing frequency I am hearing about the concerns of small farms. The costs of the program may impact their very survival.

Recently, at a meeting about the program in Maine, several protestors threw cow flaps at the state vet and another representative of the Maine Department of Agriculture. Both the state vet and the other DOA representative have worked long and hard for the welfare of agriculture in Maine. At this stage what is needed is reasoned discourse not cow flaps.

Personally I am currently on the fence about the Animal ID program. I need to know more about how it will be implemented and the most likely impact of its implementation. I believe that our small farmers are better in tune with the welfare of their animals than are those in agribusiness. Thus it is important to me that the needs of the smaller farms, as well as the general population, be addressed.

I urge that you keep informed on the program and that you let your representatives know your thoughts and concerns ... but leave those beans at home.

Lynd