



**Center for Beef Excellence  
Beef Bytes  
March 19, 2012**

Dear Friends,

Welcome to spring 2012! As I traveled across the mid-state this weekend, I saw wheels turning in the fields to prepare for the new season.

With spring comes questions regarding both plants and pests. The PA Plants web site provides a portal to the PA Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Plant Industry that regulates pest and plant concerns including pesticide applicators' licensing in the Commonwealth. Visit [PA Plants](#) for assistance.

Next week the PA Pest Management Association will be coming to Harrisburg for their annual legislative day. The group will have an "Ask the Expert" area in the Capitol Rotunda to answer questions surrounding the industry. If something is bugging you, stop by the booth for advice or to meet Chase Mutley, the bed bug sniffing dog.

Have a good week and call the office at 717-635-2320 with any concerns.

Sincerely,  
MeeCee

***Articles of Interest***

**Pennsylvania News:**

[Shell Facilities in Pennsylvania](#)

Beaver county was selected as the site for Shell Oil Co. to construct a new ethane cracker. The \$2 billion project is still in the planning stages, and construction is subject to environmental, economic and legislative factors.

**National News:**

["Pink Slime" Debate](#)

Reports of ground beef containing horrible additives, labeled 'pink slime' by the media, worried consumers. However, several industry groups are working to spread the truth about the safety, wholesomeness and effectiveness of adding lean beef trimmings to ground beef.

[Water Use in Beef Production](#)

The Global Water Partnership maintains that it takes 635 gallons of water to produce one hamburger, but their statistics do not match current research. US beef production is highly efficient, minimizing the use of inputs, and continues to improve over time.

[E. coli Controls](#)

A report from the US Government Accountability Office stresses the importance of controlling E. coli before harvest. Suggestions include improving the approval process for

new E. coli vaccines, better testing for STEC strains and inspecting cattle for cleanliness before slaughter.

### [Checkoff Revisions](#)

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association is proposing that contracts with the beef checkoff should be expanded to allow non-profit industry organizations to work with checkoff programs. Producer support for the checkoff is high and this would improve the value of the program.

### **Global News:**

#### [BSE Restrictions](#)

The US is considering a policy that would use World Organization for Animal Health standards for BSE risk to impact beef import decisions. This could strengthen the US position in trade negotiations with other countries. However, the proposal is expected to generate considerable debate during the comment period.

#### [World Food Prices](#)

Experts from the United Nations expect to see lower world food prices and less volatility in the markets during 2012. This is due mainly to higher production. The forecast for the next 10 years, though, continues to show rising food prices.

#### [Mexican Trade Factors](#)

The drought that hit Texas and the southern plain has changed cattle production in Mexico as well. The country has seen liquidation due to drought and increase imports of US beef in 2011. Beef demand is down, due to a weak economy but Mexico remains the number 2 export market.

#### [European Union Ban Lifted](#)

The European Union has ended a ban on beef imported from the US and Canada. The ban was put in place due to concerns about growth hormones implanted into cattle. The change will allow the European Union to import beef from untreated animals.

### **Cattle Management Articles:**

#### [New Byproduct Feed](#)

Research shows potential for crude glycerin, a biodiesel byproduct, to be used in cattle diets as a replacement for either corn or forage. The supplement can be added at up to 7.5% inclusion rates without showing decreases in performance and can improve feed efficiency.

#### [Importance of the Grid](#)

Cattle feeders should understand how cattle are marketed on the grid, as this influences the price that buyers are willing to pay for fed cattle. Factors such as dressing percentage, yield grade and quality grade determine the value of a carcass, and thus the value of the live animal.

#### [Calf Scours](#)

Understanding what organism is causing diarrhea in calves can help in designing prevention plans for future years. However, all sick calves should be treated with fluids and electrolytes regardless of the contamination. Preventing exposure to contamination through keeping calving lots clean will help to minimize scour episodes.

#### [Reseeding Fields](#)

Now is the time to consider reseeding fields for the coming year. There are a variety of different grasses and legumes that can be used, but they vary in terms of palatability, hardiness, disease resistance and the soil quality needed.

- 03-19-2012      [\*\*USDA To Interview Certified Organic Growers\*\*](#)  
(Press Release)
- 03-19-2012      [\*\*USDA To Measure Farmers' Small Grain Yields\*\*](#)  
(Press Release)
- 03-19-2012      [\*\*Inside PDA for March 16, 2012\*\*](#)  
(Press Release)
- 03-19-2012      [\*\*Fix broken federal dairy program\*\*](#)  
Imagine a business where the price you receive for your product drops steeply, just as your costs to produce that product start to soar. Not a recipe for success, is it? Say hello to modern dairy farming. Three years ago, those were the exact conditions dairy farmers faced in... - [\*Altoona Mirror\*](#)
- 03-16-2012      [\*\*Bullet.in.Points\*\*](#)  
March 16, 2012 BANKING: MAXIMUM LAWFUL RATE OF INTEREST FOR RESIDENTIAL MORTGAGES FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL 2012 The Department of Banking determined that the maximum lawful rate of interest for residential mortgages for the month of April, 2012, is 4.75 percent.... - [\*Pennsylvania Legislative Services\*](#)
- 03-15-2012      [\*\*Interest in Community Supported Agriculture grows\*\*](#)  
For consumers who are looking for the best in fresh locally grown produce, this is the season for buying shares in CSAs. CSA stands for Community Supported Agriculture. At the beginning of the season, buyers purchase shares in the products of a local farm. As the growing season goes on and produce ripens, the... - [\*West Chester Daily Local News\*](#)
- 03-14-2012      [\*\*Agriculture secretary weighs in on everything from food to oil\*\*](#)  
Production of domestic oil and biomass fuel is at a high mark. Imports of foreign oil are at their lowest level since 1995. For the last three years, the U.S. has been the largest producer of natural gas. So why are oil prices flirting with \$100-per-barrel and gasoline prices... - [\*Scranton Times\*](#)
- 03-14-2012      [\*\*The Human Cost of Animal Suffering\*\*](#)  
Until a couple of years ago I believed that the primary reasons to eat less meat were environment- and health-related, and there's no question that those are valid reasons. But animal welfare has since become a large part of my thinking as well. And I say this as someone not known to his friends... - [\*New York Times\*](#)
- 03-13-2012      [\*\*Hunterdon County cheese maker cited over tainted milk used to make ricotta, federal authorities say\*\*](#)  
Federal authorities say a Hunterdon County cheese maker used tainted milk to make ricotta cheese. Federal prosecutors say the raw milk from Pennsylvania had been condemned because of high levels of antibiotics. Lebanon Cheese Co., of Lebanon Borough, and its president were charged... - [\*Easton Express-Times\*](#)

## **Legislative Activity**

[SB 1298](#)

[Smucker](#)

Amends the Pennsylvania Farmland and Forest Land Assessment Act further providing for definitions and for appeals.

**Printer Number(s):** [P1685](#) [P1864](#)

**Bill History:** 03-13-12 S Meeting set for Off the Floor, Rules Committee  
Conference Ro ...Senate Appropriations  
03-13-12 S Reported as committed from Senate Appropriations  
03-14-12 S Set on the Senate Calendar  
03-14-12 S Second consideration  
03-26-12 S Set on the Senate Calendar

## **Capitol Review**

[Rickmania swept through Alabama and Mississippi Tuesday night](#), as Pennsylvania native son Rick Santorum outdistanced his rivals to capture key Primary wins. Santorummentum!

Santorum's victories mean that [Pennsylvania's April 24<sup>th</sup> Primary will loom large on the national scale](#), and recent polls show Rick with a comfy lead over "frontrunner" Mitt Romney. Brace yourselves, friends. You are about to be hit over the skull with millions of dollars in attack ads. By April 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Romney camp might just have you convinced that Santorum caused the Johnstown Flood.

Before we get to the corned beef and cabbage of this week's news, here is a special shout-out to [State Senator Lisa Boscola, who this week introduced a bill to make office betting pools legal](#). This is great news for NCAA Tournament pool buffs who probably don't even realize they are breaking the law. Not that we would ever consider doing that, even though we had a pretty nice run of victories yesterday. Or we didn't. Stop accusing us!!

Holy cracker, fine people! [Shell has announced it will build a massive, billion-dollar ethylene cracking facility in good old Beaver County](#), capping months of furious competition with Ohio and West Virginia. Apparently, Shell woke up yesterday and realized that building the plant in one of those states meant that they would actually have to live in Ohio or West Virginia.

The news of the week under the dome was [final passage of a voter identification bill](#) which, after three days of fiercely partisan debate, is now the law of the land. In the coming days, it will no doubt enter the hands of U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, and/or a court somewhere in Pennsylvania. In fact, if you listened to the debate, a lot of the dissenters from the Democratic side of the aisle sounded almost as if they were putting facts on the record in anticipation of the court battle.

And just in case the new law survives legal challenges, you can get a [new picture ID for free at PennDOT starting today](#). That's right; free.

[The governor this week also got a little testy with some GOP leaders](#) who have suggested restoring much of Governor Corbett's proposed cuts to higher education. Fine, said the governor, but where will you get the cash, the higher education money fairy (not to be confused with the transportation infrastructure funding fairy, who also apparently doesn't exist)? Corbett also reiterated his point that tuition has been going up faster than gas prices, regardless of how much money the state gives to colleges and universities, so why throw good money after bad? In fact, the last year that Penn State did not raise tuition?

Hint: The Doors released their self-titled debut album. Yup, that would be 1967 for those of you playing at home.

[To which Penn State responded...fine, we will go private.](#) Put that in your pipe and smoke it. A member of the Blue and White Board of Trustees this week met with leaders from Cornell University about doing just that. [And then later in the week, Penn State said it was just kidding.](#)

Coincidentally, [the governor's special select blue-ribbon panel on higher education got together for the first time this week.](#) The group has been charged with figuring out the best way to fund higher education, among other things. The group will also explore ways to expand technical education opportunities, since reportedly there is some kind of gas formation in Pennsylvania that will eventually require a lot of drilling-type folks.

Two State Senators have [introduced a bill to block the Department of Public Welfare from implementing a new asset test for food stamp recipients.](#) This is a necessary move because last year the General Assembly gave DPW wide-ranging authority to make all kinds of regulatory changes without legislative input. So instead of the department having to ask the legislature to make changes to policies, the legislature now has to find ways to stop the department from making changes to policies. Understand? Horse first, then cart.

According to Ohio policymakers and regulatory folks, [injecting drilling wastewater deep into the ground has caused – wait for it – a series of small earthquakes.](#) Yes, we have now figured out a way to make man-made earthquakes, folks. Is there anything modern science can't do? This news no doubt excited Hollywood filmmakers, who no longer have to use special effects to destroy an entire city.

Lawmakers this week held a hearing on a plan to [eliminate school property taxes by shifting to local sales or income-based levies.](#) Or impact fees, as we've come to know them. In any case, what they quickly discovered is that the issue of state support for education and the level of local taxation are inextricably linked, so you can't really address one without the other. It is sorta like tuna fish and mayonnaise. Sure, it is still technically tuna without the mayo, but come on, who wants to eat that?

[Exelon Energy scraped together the requisite \\$8 billion and took over Constellation Energy.](#) Exelon also operates an obscure little nuclear power plant down in Middletown that you have probably never heard of. In any case, Exelon is now one of the largest electric power suppliers in the nation, with an estimated 6.6 million customers.

This week's controversial state budgetary cash diversion (last week was \$72 million from the horsemen to other agriculture programs) belongs to...[farmland preservation!](#) The proposed budget contains a \$21 million shift from that fund to the General Fund, which is giving county-level farmland preservation groups a serious case of agitation. Perhaps we've preserved enough farmland? Is there some sort total acreage number we were shooting for and we've gotten there?

The state's largest health care union this week came out in [opposition to a proposal to privatize nursing jobs within the walls of our state prisons.](#) While there are probably more than a few areas of government that could be better run by private firms, services delivered inside some of the most dangerous places in our Commonwealth do not make the list, quite frankly.

[The state's largest teachers union this week also made a little noise](#), as it claims there are a whole lot of school districts staring at bankruptcy due to shrinking state support, higher pension costs and the inability to raise local property taxes without a voter referendum. We have no way of knowing if there are a bunch of Chester-Uplands-in-waiting out there ready to go ace-deuce, but if there are, next year's state budget fight could be a very long and nasty one. People don't generally expect to wake up and find out that their high school is up for sheriff's sale.

[The Corbett Administration's proposed changes to the state's Keystone Exams](#), a battery of high school graduation proficiency tests, has hit some rough waters. Corbett's folks would like to change the number of exams from ten down to three, focusing on biology, algebra and language arts. These exams have been redesigned and pushed back so many times that there is a very good chance they won't be in place until legislative reapportionment is finally finished -- the 2021 legislative reapportionment.

[A group of advocates for Pennsylvania's disabled has filed suit against the proposed state budget](#), claiming that the Corbett Administration is intentionally requesting too few dollars to sustain programs designed to help those they serve. Filing a suit before a budget is passed by the General Assembly is, to our knowledge, an unprecedented move. Sort of like a pre-emptive strike.

### ***In Other News***

03-19-2012      [The PaSDC's New 2012 Pennsylvania Facts Brochure is Now Available](#)  
(Press Release)

03-19-2012      [PennFuture's Session Daze for March 16, 2012](#)  
(Press Release)

03-19-2012      [DOS: March 26 is Deadline to Register to Vote in Pennsylvania Primary](#)  
(Press Release)

03-19-2012      [Allergy season rushes in](#)  
The warmer temperatures of spring usher in the arrival of pollen and other misery-inducing allergens REXMONT - Spring is in the air and, for many of us, so are the allergens that make life miserable. "The allergy season starts right now and typically ends in mid-October,"... - [Lebanon Daily News](#)

03-15-2012      [Governor Corbett Signs Voter ID Bill to Require Photo Identification](#)  
(Press Release)