

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Did You Forget 12/13?

Unfortunately I did! However it's never too late to honor the oldest military unit in our America's great history, our National Guard. December 13, 1636 our first militia regiments in North America were organized in Massachusetts, sometimes known as the "Minute Men". The early Massachusetts Bay Colony's General Court's recognition of needed defense of the colony. The descendants of these earliest military units are today, the 181st Infantry; the 182nd Infantry; the 101st Field Artillery; and the 101st Engineer Battalion of the Massachusetts Army National Guard. Therefore today this date, last Monday a week ago, marks the 385th birthday of the very beginning of America's oldest military units. This early National Guard history and units, thereof collectively make up today's National Guard.

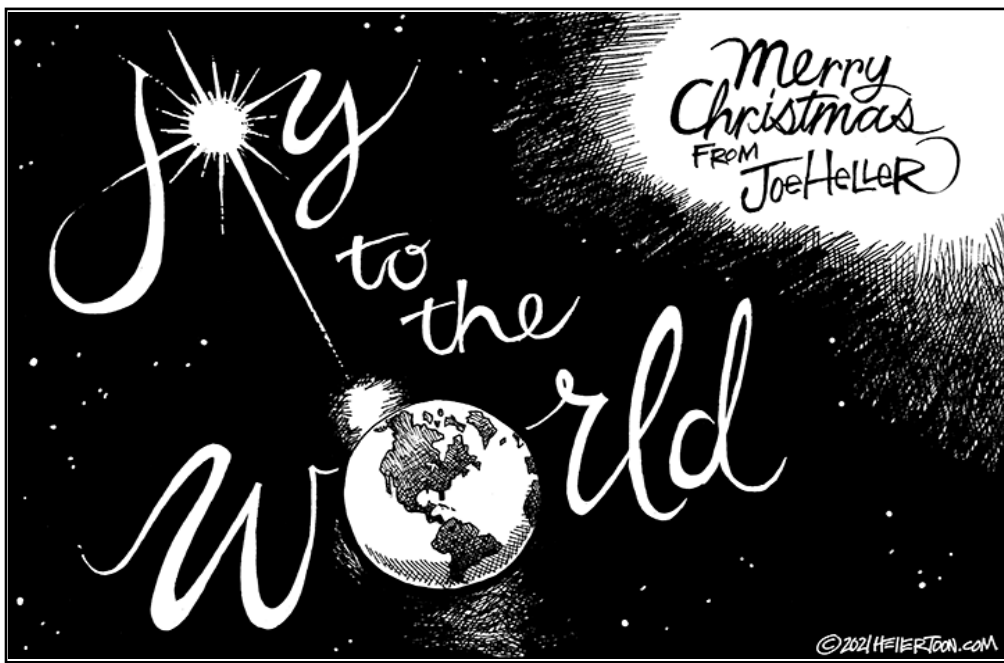


Like all our nation's often overlooked and under appreciated military branches and those who Honorably served America, our NG is taken for granted. These valiant volunteers, men and women are often activated for any and all type of assistance needed in emergencies and catastrophes, such as the recent tornado outbreaks across middle southeastern states. And if you'll remember the Chinese flu outbreak, whereas emergency medical facilities and hospital tents were needed. As well as experienced medical personal to aid and administer assistance to those many who were suffering through the flu outbreak. Those who volunteer to serve in either our Army NG, or our Air NG are often referred to as "citizen soldiers". They have the same responsibilities and privileges of those in the regular military. When duty calls and any of our NG units are activated, they may very well have to sacrifice their civilian lives and even serve in combat missions overseas, augmenting our regular forces. Possibly serving in any of many support positions. Very often used, here at home during any chaotic or catastrophic event. Anyone who has ever needed them in time of duress clearly appreciates what they are able, willing and able to do. These NG members have many skills and specialties, often shared and brought over from their full time civilian jobs.

Much like other military observances the NG birthday is not a national holiday, a bank holiday, or special day off on the federal calendar. One common activity shared with other military branches birthdays is the cake cutting ceremony whereas the oldest and youngest member present share the first cutting of the cake event. At any rate Happy Birthday, belated as it is, to all those who have served in our NG units and many more birthdays for our indispensable Army and Air National Guard units, nation wide! As with all who have Honorably served America in uniform and maintained their Honor and Love for our Country as Veterans, they are all special and often referred to as Patriots. Please give them the love and honor they deserve.

And please, by all means have a Very Merry Christmas and remember the real reason for the season!

Semper Paratus



High Fertilizer

Fertilizer prices are going up and up. I'm not going to list prices in this article, because by the time this article is published, the prices will probably be higher, but we are getting closer and closer to historical highs. High fertilizer prices present difficult choices for farmers. Today I want to talk about some best management practices for cattlemen when fertilizer prices are high.

First off be wary of products that sound too good to be true. If high fertilizer prices have you looking at something new as an alternative to fertilizer, look to see if that product has sound university based research behind it supporting it. Spending money on a product that just has good testimonials may end up being a waste of money.

Cow-calf operations have a bit of an advantage on their pasture because many of the nutrients that are applied get recycled in the form of manure, are put back onto the field by the animals. Depending on your stocking rate, the average amount of nutrients removed per acre by a cow-calf pair is 5 lb N, 7 lb P2O5, and 1 lb K2O.

When fertilizer prices are high, soil testing becomes even more important. A soil test will tell you what the pH of your soil is. Soil pH regulates the availability of nutrients to plants. Therefore, if your pH isn't in the right range you could be wasting money on fertilizer. With prices as high as they are, applying lime early, to get your pH right, is more important than ever. Ideally, we want pH to be 6 - 6.5.

A soil test will also tell you how much of different nutrients you have in your soil. So, if your soil test tells you that your phosphorus and potassium levels are in a medium zone you can back off them and not spend a lot of money on them. Soil test reports may include nitrogen in them, but nitrogen is very mobile in the soil and leaches out easily. That's why nitrogen recommendations are usually standardized based on years of research. When taking soil samples, avoid areas where animals congregate, these spots will naturally have higher levels of nutrients. In cattle operations rotational stocking or rotational grazing can increase pasture productivity by 30% compared to continuous grazing. The tighter you can make your rotations, the more productivity you will see. That means the fertilizer you do have to use you will be able to stretch it farther with good rotational grazing. With rotational grazing, you also get a more even distribution of manure over the field.

Generally, one ton of hay contains 35 lb N, 15 lb P2O5, and 55 lb K2O. If you're selling hay this information can help you figure out your price point. On the other hand, if you're buying hay it can help you figure out if there is hay out there that is cheaper for you to buy than it is to grow. Hay quality is also an important part of hay pricing. When you are feeding hay, moving the hay to different parts of the pasture will also help distribute those nutrients.

Clover and other legumes can help supply nitrogen in your field, but your field should be at least 25% clover for it to be supplying an amount of nitrogen that's of any significance.

If you are cutting back on nitrogen fertilizer, the best time to apply fertilizer to cool season grasses like fescue and orchardgrass is in the fall and not the spring.

If you have questions about how to handle high fertilizer prices contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.



Putting the "X" back in Christmas

It is rare that I get to speak to you so close, and prior to the Christmas holiday. I'll take this opportunity to wish you all a happy holiday season and thank you for your support and encouragement. Many thanks to my editor, Shawn, for her patience and good humor. Particular thanks to my wife, Tracey, for her support and forbearance when it's time to write, and for making the best coffee, ever. In a way, it feels like we just had Christmas, and the last one seemed like a continuation of the one before that: a brief pause in the long grinding slow motion train wreck emergency of the plague years.

Of course, that's just a secular interpretation of time. It's the official version. It's the trending version. It's what you get when you allow the pixel world, the political world and the forces of buy-one-get-one-free to direct your thinking and feeling.

Will I be able to buy all the gifts I want this year? Will my packages make it there on time? Will there be enough toilet paper and cream cheese on the shelves this winter? Is Santa Claus a symbol of white supremacy? (Saint Nicholas was born in Turkey, so, no.) Will I have to get another booster shot in the spring? Is it safe to go outside?

Fortunately, people of faith are not so obsessed with these burning questions and the burdensome issues of breaking news. It's not that they don't affect us. We live in this world and we have to navigate it. If the crowd is stampeding, we certainly don't have to join in, but that doesn't mean that we're going to stand still and be trampled underfoot.

Faith lives in the secular world, but it is not of that world. It is the bridge between the supernatural and the natural, and it welcomes this season which celebrates the birth of Christ as an opportunity to remind us of what is truly important.

This year the secular world is concerned with pandemics, politics, pigments and pronouns. Just a few short years ago, we were goaded with letters of the alphabet. Remember the popular talking head phrase, "The War on Christmas?" One of the worst perceived attacks was the abbreviation, "Xmas" in lieu of the full word. The forces of evil were intent on taking the "Christ" out of "Christmas." Don't you love it when a bit of history shines some light into a dark corner? Here's a bit of history: For generations, the Bible of western civilization was written in Greek. The first two letters of "Christ," or "Cristos" in Greek are "chi" (C), which looks like our "X," and "rho" (R), which looks like our "P." The two symbols were combined in a monogram which became part of the battle standard of the Emperor, Constantine, who converted the Roman Empire to Christianity.

Abbreviations have long been used by the church when everything was painstakingly written by hand, and particularly after the invention of the printing press in 1436. Type setting for the press was also done by hand and it was expensive and time consuming. There's no doubt that "Xmas" has been used by people in a hurry or too lazy to spell out "Christmas," but there is no ad revenue or political capital in that story. Which brings us back to this year and this season. The times are troubled. To a student of history, that sounds almost redundant, because in a historical context, there is no time devoid of trouble. But trouble can be a good teacher, and for people of faith, those who had it before and those who discovered it during the plague years, we are living an object lesson in what "X" means, and putting "X" back into Christmas is just the beginning.

Merry Christmas!

GUEST COLUMNS

From time to time, people in the community have a grand slant on an issue that would make a great guest editorial. Those who feel they have an issue of great importance should call our editor and talk with him about the idea. Others have a strong opinion after reading one of the many columns that appear throughout the paper. If so, please write. Please remember that publication of submitted editorials is not guaranteed.

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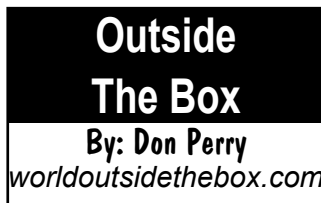
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Letters opposing the views of previous comments are welcomed; however, letters cannot be directed at, nor name or ridicule previous writers. Letters that recognize good deeds of others will be considered for publication.*

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Letters to The Editor

Biden Created this Inflation Mess

Dear Editor,

During this past year we have seen the effects of inflation everywhere we go: at the gas pump, at the grocery store, and when buying the gifts on our Christmas list. But the Biden administration wants you to believe that inflation is "transitory." A 7% increase in the Consumer Price Index over the past year is the fastest rise since 1982. And of course, as we all have witnessed, the most devastating price increases have come in the energy industries. For example, the gasoline index rose 58.1 percent over the last year, its largest 12-month increase since 1980. Does that sound very transitory? The mindset of this administration isn't much comfort to the everyday consumer who sees rising prices and wonders how long this mess that Biden created is going to last. And it appears that there is no end in sight. So the next time you hear a politician say to you this current inflation is just temporary or no big deal (i.e. transitory), or when the Biden administration tries to answer the problem of inflation with more government spending, you can remind yourself of this truth. And know that you have the power to make changes at the ballot box.

Tim Groza

Omicron more transmissible

Dear Editor,

Omicron virus 70 times more transmissible than the delta variant. Get vaccinated now!

While the Delta variant is still a worrying presence, there could be millions of more Americans infected within weeks due to the high transmissibility of the Omicron variant, said Michael Osterholm, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota.

We're really just about to experience a viral blizzard," Osterholm told CNN's Erin Burnett. While the vaccine apparently is offering less protection than against the delta variant, it still offers protection against catching the virus and against more severe symptoms of the virus. And, the vaccine is safe. A study published Aug. 25 in The NEW England Journal of Medicine by researchers from Clalit Research Institute in Israel, Harvard Medical School, and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health affirms the overall safety of the vaccine and underscore that the risk of adverse consequences from actual infection with SARS-CoV-2 far outweighs potential vaccine risks. This is not a matter of individual freedoms nor political considerations. It is a matter of fighting a common enemy and caring about our neighbors and friends and family. Get vaccinated and help protect each other!

Jim Grazis, CRTT, RPSGT

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