

Y2K and the Poultry Fancier

The Y2K computer bug may cause the poultry fancier his share of grief and then some. In case you haven't heard, Y2K (which stands for "Year 2000") refers to a worldwide computer bug which could cause major economic problems on January 1, 2000.

Why It's There

Back in the 50's, 60's and 70's, storage space on a computer was very expensive. In some cases, data was not stored on hard drives like we use today, but on punched paper cards instead. (Remember the punched computer cards that used to come with the phone bill?) Each card had a physical limitation of 80 characters and a few of those were reserved for special purposes. Thus, for practical reasons, it was advantageous to try to squeeze as much information on a single card as possible. Going over the card's limit by just one character meant that a second card would have to be used. In the case of a billing or payroll system, a customer's card had to be re-punched when the data on it changed. Thus, while the cost of a single card isn't that much, it adds up if you multiply it times the number of customers times 12 billing cycles in a year. Using two or three cards instead of one would make the cost two or three times more expensive.

Computer programmers used many tricks to avoid wasting characters. One way was to store your information referenced by a customer number rather than by your real name. If your name was "Dimetrius Michaelangelo Sandalburger", that would take up 36 of those 80 available characters (including spaces). Now, if you become known as "00345" to the computer, *that* only takes up five characters.

At the time, the thought of using four characters to store the year portion of the date was unthinkable. If a programmer stored the date year as "1956" when all he really needed was just "56", he was probably in for a good thrashing by the boss. Storing the century portion of the date was considered frivolous. Besides, it was the general assumption that the computer programs would be re-written long before the year 2000 when they would become a problem.

Unfortunately, the problem didn't end there. In the early 80's, computer storage space became much cheaper. Punched cards were beginning to make their appearance in museums. More and more companies were switching to either magnetic tape or magnetic disks. Having the customer's full name in a data record became commonplace. There was no longer any reason to store a year with only two characters.

However, a tradition is a hard animal to break. Despite there being no need to do so, programs continued to be written that only used two digits for the date. A customer's data record also still contains a customer number in addition to their real name. In fact, it wasn't until about the 90's that new programs started to be written that stored the century portion of the date.

How This Affects You

Here is a simple example of what can happen

if a bank's computer has the Y2K bug. Suppose you take out a Certificate of Deposit at ElCheapo Bank and Trust for \$1,000.00 for one year beginning January 1, 1999 to 2000 at 2% simple interest. Here is how your interest is supposed to be calculated:

Number of years = Ending Year - Beginning Year
Interest Payment = Number of years X Interest rate
Ending Balance = Opening Deposit + Interest Pmt.

In this example,

Number of years = 2000 - 1999 = 1
Interest Payment = 1 X \$20 = \$20 credit
Ending Balance = \$1,000 + \$20 = \$1,020

Well at least that's how its supposed to work. Things come out drastically different if the century is left out of the calculation:

Number of years = 00 - 99 = -99
Interest Payment = -99 X \$20 = -\$1,980 debit
Ending Balance = \$1,000 - \$1,980 = \$980 Overdrawn

As you can see, if your bank has the Y2K bug, your accounts may suddenly become overdrawn on January 1, 2000. Also, because interest is always calculated as a percentage based on the number 100, it doesn't matter whether you have \$10 or \$10,000,000,000 in your account. A debit of 99 years worth of interest at even 1% will wipe out your account no matter how you slice it.

Look at your bank statement. Does it use a four digit year to describe your transactions? Or does it still use two digits. There is no way to be 100% certain until January 1, 2000, but lets just say that if your statements only have two digit years in the dates, then that is a bad sign.

While banks may be the most significant, they aren't even half of the problem. Take automated billing systems such as your telephone. These are the kind of systems that will turn off your phone automatically if you don't pay your bill in a reasonable amount of time. Most computers classify 99 years as being unreasonably delinquent. If the Y2K bug bytes, your phone may be disconnected for non-payment on January 1, 2000 even if you just paid a week earlier in December 1999.

Many billing systems will become stricken by the Y2K bug. However, systems that do not use automatic disconnects will be less likely to affect you. Suppose the turn-off guy from the electric company, who has to physically disconnect delinquent accounts, suddenly gets an order to disconnect *everybody*. If he has half the intelligence of a rock, he will realize that there was a computer glitch somewhere and will not actually disconnect anybody.

So you might think that your electricity is immune to the Y2K bug. Not so. It turns out that many of the generators that the power company uses are run by computers. In addition to other tasks, they will periodically shut down a generator for routine maintenance after it has run continuously for a certain length of time. If the computers that control the power company's generators have the Y2K bug, they might shut down all the generators on January 1, 2000 because they would think that the generators have been running for 99 years non-stop and are in desper-

ate need of maintenance.

To make things worse, the power company is connected to the National Electric Power Grid. Essentially, all electric companies are wired together. The theory is that if one has problems, the others can take up the slack. However, with the Y2K bug, more than a few power companies may stop functioning all at once. If this happens, the remaining power plants will become overloaded and a cascade reaction will take place as they all shut down one by one. Therefore, even if the local power company does not have the Y2K bug, other power companies that do anywhere in the US may cause the entire country to go dark.

If you live in a rural area, you won't have any water if you get it from a well that uses an electric pump and the electricity goes off. Your incubator and brooder will cool and your baby chicks will all die. A generator will be an asset, but a generator runs off gasoline and you won't be able to get that from a gas station that doesn't have electricity to run the gas pumps.

Remember that most grocery stores these days use scanners to ring up your purchase. Few stores mark the price on the item itself anymore. Because of that, grocery stores that are hit with the Y2K bug, may not be able to open if their computers go down.

Preparedness Is The Key

All in all, if only a few critical computers in this country crash on January 1, 2000, things will look pretty bleak for the rest of us on January 2nd. However, there are a few simple things that you can do to take the sting out of it. Most of them are identical to what you would do to prepare for a bad hurricane.

For the financial side of things, save ALL of your bank statements and receipts. Don't throw any of them away because you may have to prove that your balance is what you said it was. Also, you may want to spread your liquid assets among several different banks. This way, if one bank falls prey to the Y2K bug, the others might be just fine. If you plan on doing this, now is the time to start opening new accounts. You should withdraw just enough cash to keep yourself going for about a month. Don't take out all your money as this is unnecessary and may serve to make a bad problem even worse. It is important to remember that the banks aren't going under, but they might be closing their doors for a few weeks while they fix the bug.

On the communications side of things, remember that you might not have phone service - neither land line nor cell phones. It may be a good idea to dig out that old CB radio that has been collecting dust in your closet. It may be your only way to get a message out to the rest of the world. A battery powered television or radio may be your only reliable source of information. Try to get the kind that can be plugged into your car's cigarette lighter.

For food, make sure that you have enough canned goods and non-perishable food to last you and your family for a month. The next time you shop for food, buy an extra can or two of things you know your family will eat. Stockpile canned food, but don't hoard it. If you require prescription drugs, make sure you

have enough on hand to last you for a month.

To prepare for an electrical outage, a generator is a must if you get your water from a well. The problem is that it takes a pretty big generator to run a well pump. You'll need about a 4,000 watt generator to handle a typical well pump. The bigger the generator, the more money you'll spend. As more and more people realize the need to have one, the price will go even higher. If you can't afford a generator, make sure you fill up as many 5 gallon buckets as you can for hand washing and for flushing the toilet. If you have a pool or pond, you can use that water instead of storing it in buckets. You'll still need to store up plenty of clean bottled water for drinking.

If you only start your generator when you need water, you can stretch your fuel supply out for a long time. Your refrigerator and freezer don't draw a whole lot of power, but they do require continuous power. This means that your generator will quickly run out of fuel if you try to power these items with it. For that reason, it is a good idea to not have more than a few days worth of food in the freezer on December 31, 1999. At that time, turn the thermostat on these appliances to their coldest possible setting. If the power goes out, the appliance will stay cold for a longer period of time without power.

To cook your food, a gas powered stove or barbecue can come in real handy. Just don't forget to make sure you have a full propane tank. You can usually get a propane camping stove for around \$20. If you aren't already, get familiar with how these items work right away so that you don't have any unfortunate accidents on January 1, 2000.

For lighting, keep a healthy supply of flashlights and batteries on hand. If you have a generator, you could use it for the lights, but you'll probably want to conserve your fuel for the well pump. Forget about using candles unless you have a death wish. Night-time is the most obvious time that people would want to light one. It is also the time when most people fall asleep. That is a deadly combination.

You may find that your car is a valuable source of 12 volt electrical power. There are more than a few electrical appliances that are designed to plug into the cigarette lighter. You can find things like lights, vacuum cleaners, answering machines, computers, and even electric skillets that will run off a car's cigarette lighter. You can even get AC inverters that plug into the cigarette lighter that convert the car's 12 volt electricity into 115 volt electricity that allow you to run small household appliances such as a light or a can opener (forget the water pump, they don't generate enough power). While the car is convenient, it goes without saying that you must never run your car in the garage because you can kill everyone in the house with Carbon Monoxide. I mention this because more than a few people have killed themselves and their families recently by forgetting that one fact.

Lastly, you'll need plenty of gasoline to power your car and generators. Keep about 10 gallons to run the generator and top off your car's tank on the 30th or 31st. Don't store gasoline in anything other than approved containers and only outside.

No one really knows how bad the Y2K bug will be for sure. It could be just like driving over a bump in the road, or it could be like driving off a cliff. One thing for sure is that the people who aren't prepared will most certainly be worse off than those who are.

PETA Slanders Christian Religion

Just when you thought that PETA couldn't sink any lower than they already have, they go and pull a new stunt that surprises everybody. This time, in an apparent attempt to start their own cult using the name of Jesus, they are printing up T-shirts and creating web pages with the graphic shown to the right. They are proclaiming that Jesus was a vegetarian and that we should follow him - implying that if you eat meat, you will surely go to Hell.

One problem with PETA's new cult want-a-be, according to the Bible and many Christian theologians, is that **Jesus was NOT a vegetarian**. He is credited with not only eating it, but serving it to others as well.

In response to this, PETA claims that those portions of the Bible that disagree with their position were simply misprints. How convenient! PETA has trouble getting even non-Christian theologians to support their claim that Jesus did not eat meat.


PETA claims that the majority of Christian Theologians support their twisted view and cite books written by Dr. Albert Schweitzer in 1901 as evidence of this. However, this is simply a lie.

As a general rule, virtually everything that PETA says or claims is a lie. This latest stunt is certainly no exception. It is a clear example that PETA is willing to go low enough to *prey* (not pray) on Jesus' name if they think they can trick a few more people into following **them**, not Jesus.

This is definitely an all time low for PETA. It makes you wonder what they will do next to go even lower. While we all must be tolerant of other people's religion, it is important to distinguish that PETA is not a religion, but is attempting to twist an existing religion in order to further **their own** cause.

PETA SAYS:

Jesus was a Vegetarian



Follow Him

In an attempt to mock Jesus, PETA depicts him with an orange peel in place of the traditional halo. They stole the original image from a Catholic Sacred Heart brochure and digitally altered it.

Refreshments for the Meetings

May	Jeanette Robinson
June	Joe Martin
July	Arvis Okerson
August	Pat Myerscough
September	Rose Greggs
October	Maryann Van Heusen
November	Laura Perryman
December	Christmas Party

Highlights of the Gala in the Park

by Lee Salmon

We all had a good time at our April Picnic. There was lots of good food and good company. I am happy to report that we finished the work on the Premium Book. It has been turned in to Sandy, along with ribbon and Trophy orders. We purchased some cookbooks from our 4-H Club. People are still getting a response from the Handbooks. We relaxed to enjoy the rest of the day. My thanks to Don Myerscough for the great shopping list. It was very complete and I was able to get everything we needed. Have a great month and I'll see you at the next meeting. Picnic photos next month.



Classified

Rate: \$1 per line. Members get first three lines free. Send check payable to PBCPFA to Rose Greggs, 8643 El Paso Dr., Lake Worth, FL 33467-1109.

FOR SALE:

PBCPFA T-shirts, excellent quality, beautiful logo. Assorted sizes are available for \$10.00. Contact Richard Greggs (561) 433-8157. Don't be chicken, get yours today.

Rhode Island Red Pullets and Cockerels of various ages. Contact Richard Greggs at (561) 433-8157.

Chickens for sale. Various breeds, ages, and prices. We also have live meat birds. Call Richard or Linda Wright at Heavenly Acres: 561-793-5696.

WANTED:

Rhode Island Red Cockerel. Must be genetically unrelated to my existing stock. If you have one, Contact Richard Greggs at (561) 433-8157.