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Cotton Production—1951

Cotton production in 1951 will be free of government restrictions, but it may be hampered severely by other factors, such as weather and lack of planning on the part of farmers. Although weather is an unpredictable and an uncontrollable factor in agricultural production, farmers can do something about such things as planting cover crops, plowing under old cotton stalks, using adapted seed, and applying fertilizer—all of which contribute to higher production.

What can farmers do to insure maximum production of cotton in 1951?

◆ Make plans for planting cotton only on land that is suited to its production and that will, with normal care, give a reasonable yield per acre. Not every acre should be planted in cotton, even though there are no government restrictions on planting. Fitting cotton into a balanced farm program, which includes the growing of legumes and rotation of crops, will, over a period of years, enable farmers to produce more cotton at lower costs. Moreover, it is unlikely that unrestricted production will be permitted beyond the next year or two. Thus, those who abandon their long-range farm program and go all-out for cotton in 1951 may again face an expensive and difficult readjustment in their farm operation when and if controls are reimposed.

◆ Obtain at an early date sufficient undamaged seed of a desirable variety to plant all of next year's cotton acreage, including a reserve for replanting. This action will prove advantageous because the supply of desirable cottonseed has been reduced materially by the short 1950 cotton crop and

the wet, cloudy weather this fall; and cottonseed for planting will be scarce next spring. Much of the seed being harvested either has been damaged in the field or has a moisture content too high for safe storage.

In tests at the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station in 1949, stored cottonseed containing more than 11-percent moisture heated excessively and showed a marked decrease in germination percentage. In these tests heating and loss of germination of cottonseed with as much as 12-percent moisture were prevented by drawing air through the seed at weekly intervals. This aeration was also effective in keeping unsound, damaged seed with 14-percent moisture from becoming excessively hot; however, germination, which tested only 40 percent at time of storage, dropped to zero after 4½ months in the bin.

◆ Plow under all cotton stalks and trash immediately after harvest. It is generally agreed that much of this year's early infestation of cotton insects, particularly boll weevils, and the spread of pink bollworm into southcentral Texas were the direct result of the incomplete clean-up programs last fall. In virtually all tests, early destruction of stalks has proved to be an essential and effective step in controlling boll weevils and pink bollworms. Production in 1951 could be reduced materially by failure to clean up fields this fall.

◆ Plant cover crops following stalk destruction. Cover crops, such as vetch, Austrian winter peas, small grains, and many of the clovers, help to hold the soil in place, improve soil aeration and drainage, and add valuable humus and plant food to the land.

When properly fertilized, their use in the rotation can boost cotton yields as much as 50 percent.

◆ Purchase sufficient fertilizer for next year's crops and, if you have storage space, take delivery now. Even though production of commercial fertilizer is likely to be at or near a record level, the demand is increasing each year, and those who wait until next spring may find their dealer sold out or unable to make delivery. Fertilizer manufacturers and transportation companies can make adequate quantities of fertilizer available only if delivery can be spread over several months.

Seasonal Trends in Turkey Prices

Raising turkeys has become big business for many southwestern farmers. Production in this area in 1950 is expected to be a new record of more than 80,000,000 pounds, and income from this source may exceed \$25,000,000.

Profits or losses on turkeys will depend, in many cases, upon obtaining the highest possible market price for the birds. A drop in price of 2 or 3 cents per pound may wipe out the profit margin, while still sharper declines

may result in serious financial loss to some producers.

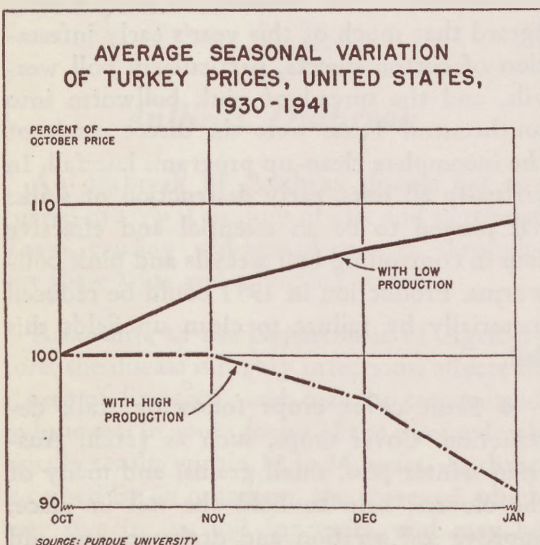
Selling at the wrong time or at undesirable weights and marketing poor-quality birds frequently result in unprofitable prices for growers. These mistakes can be corrected by buying poults hatched from improved broad-breasted varieties, suited to the demands of the market; by selling only well-finished, full-fleshed birds; and by watching market quotations and comments to determine the weights in greatest demand.

Selecting the proper time to sell requires a study of seasonal trends in prices. While prices cannot be forecast with accuracy by such a study, the most probable trend from week-to-week can be anticipated. Past records show that in years of high turkey production prices usually decline rather sharply after Thanksgiving. (See accompanying chart.)

This trend did not hold true in 1949, for although production was at a high level, prices increased from October through most of December. However, it should be remembered that last year a price-support program was in effect for turkeys and that the Government bought heavily during December. Without this support, prices likely would have fallen rather sharply after Thanksgiving.

The Department of Agriculture has announced that prices for this year's record turkey crop will not be supported. Under such conditions it is likely that prices will follow the normal seasonal pattern, and marketing of birds as soon as they are well finished and are of desirable market weights may be advisable. Early sales—by Thanksgiving—are expected to bring highest prices. Heavier marketings of broilers as well as of pork, anticipated during December, will exert downward pressure on turkey prices during the Christmas season.

Growers should also take note of premiums usually paid for turkey hens and for lighter-weight toms. Heavier birds usually sell at a discount, so there is little reason for holding them after they are well fleshed and finished.



Change Lamb Ration Slowly

Lambs are extremely sensitive to changes in feed, and heavy losses may result if care is not exercised in changing from one type of ration to another, states Dr. J. W. Wolfe, veterinarian at Oklahoma A. & M. College.

Dr. Wolfe points out that death losses caused by a sudden change in feed are usually the result of an outbreak of a disease called "enterotoxemia." Changing suddenly from poor- or ordinary-quality feed to a rich and more palatable ration creates conditions favorable for the disease. Outbreaks frequently occur when lambs are changed from dry areas to regions with abundant nutritious grass or when they are placed suddenly in the feeding lot with access to large amounts of concentrates. Any change in the ration should be made gradually to prevent an outbreak of the disease.

Enterotoxemia is usually fatal, with death occurring within 4 to 8 hours. If the disease is suspected, the flock should be placed in a lot and fed only hay and water until the veterinarian has made his diagnosis and recommended treatment. Spreading of the disease can be checked by a veterinarian with the use of certain biological products, but fast action is necessary to avoid loss once the disease develops.

Lights Increase Egg Production

As days become shorter, use of electric lights in the laying house increases egg production. Higher egg prices during the fall months make this practice particularly profitable.

For maximum egg production, a hen needs 12 to 14 hours of light each day, according to W. J. Moore, associate poultry husbandman of the Texas A. & M. College Extension Service. Use of artificial lights to lengthen the hen's working day should begin early in the fall and be continued throughout the winter.

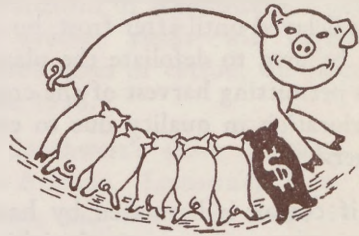
Lights can be used either in the morning or evening, and a simple timing device can be installed to turn the lights on or off auto-

matically at any given time. Mr. Moore recommends use of two 25- to 40-watt light bulbs for each 400 feet of floor space.

The Sixth Little Pig

Litters of fewer than six pigs are unprofitable, as income from the sale of five pigs is needed to offset the cost of producing a litter, according to A. A. Heidebrecht, Oklahoma A. & M. College animal husbandman.

More litters of a profitable size will be raised, says Mr. Heidebrecht, if farmers select breeding gilts from sows which have farrowed large litters, since size of litter is dependent, in part, upon inherited characteristics.



Of equal importance is care of the sows, particularly just prior to and immediately after farrowing. They should be given access to plenty of clean water and fed a ration containing about 20-percent protein and fortified with calcium and phosphorus. Plenty of green pasture will reduce feed requirements materially and, also, provide a source of Vitamins A and D. If pasture is not available, bright, leafy legume hay should be fed daily.

New Dairy Barn Plans

Plans for milking barns that reduce labor and can be used for either a large or small herd have been prepared by the Louisiana State University Extension Service. An outstanding feature of the barns is that milking stalls are on a level 30 inches above the aisle in which the milker works, making it possible to care for the cows and do the milking without bending or squatting.

Like most of the "milking-parlor"-type barns, space is provided for only four to six cows. As the animals come in from the pasture

or loafing barn, they are washed in stalls at the entrance to the milking barn and then moved up a ramp into stalls where they are fed grain and milked. When the first group of cows has been milked, they are driven out and a second group brought into the milking stalls. The use of this type of barn permits an expansion in the dairy herd without the expense of constructing additional barn space.

Cotton Defoliation Recommendations

Defoliation of cotton is necessary if the crop is to be harvested with mechanical strippers. Natural defoliation will occur if harvest is delayed until after frost, but chemicals can be used to defoliate the plants earlier, thus permitting harvest of the crop with less deterioration in quality due to exposure to weather.

Even if cotton is harvested by hand, defoliation increases the speed of picking and usually results in a cleaner pick. Defoliation prior to the first frost also destroys food for cotton insects and facilitates a thorough clean-up of stalks.

The specific chemical defoliant to use and the method of application depend on the growth of the cotton plants and on weather conditions at the time of defoliation, according to F. C. Elliott, cotton work specialist for the Texas A. & M. College Extension Service. Chemical defoliants should be applied at least 2 weeks before the first frost is expected and preferably when the youngest bolls are 25 days old.

Either dusts or sprays can be used. When dust defoliants are used, plenty of moisture in the air and a heavy dew on the plants are necessary for satisfactory results, and best results are obtained when dusts are applied with airplanes. On the other hand, sprays may be applied at any time, even with winds up to 10 miles per hour, and application with ground machines gives satisfactory results.

Several chemicals, such as calcium cyanamide dust, ammonium thiocyanate, potassium cyanate, and sodium monochloroacetate, have been used successfully for defoliating cotton, and sprays can be prepared from most of these materials by mixing at the rate of 1 pound of powder for each gallon of water. Spray applications should be made at the rate of from 6 to 10 gallons per acre, depending upon the chemical used. It is important to follow manufacturer's directions in application, because too much defoliant may "freeze" the leaves on the plants, while an underdose gives poor defoliation.

Publications

Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station,
Baton Rouge:

Creep Feeding Calves, Extension Publication 1066, by W. T. Cobb.

Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station,
Stillwater:

Charcoal Rot of Sorghum, Bulletin No. B-355, by Dallas F. Wadsworth and John B. Sieglinger.

Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, College Station:

Peanut Hulls, Johnsongrass Hay and Vetch Screenings in Rations for Fattening Steers, Progress Report 1264, by B. C. Langley and others.

Grain Sorghum Variety Tests at Lubbock, 1947-49, Progress Report 1265, by D. L. Jones and others.

Cotton Defoliation Tests in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, Progress Report 1267, by C. A. Burlison and others.

Production and Marketing Administration, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.:

Development of Scourable Sheep-Branding Fluids, by George C. LeCompte.

Copies of these bulletins may be secured by request to the publishers.