

# Agricultural

## NEWS LETTER

F E D E R A L   R E S E R V E   B A N K   O F   D A L L A S

Vol. 6, No. 9

DALLAS, TEXAS

September 15, 1951

### **SUPPORT THE DEFENSE BOND DRIVE**

**SEPTEMBER 3 - OCTOBER 27**

- ★ *Defense bonds are your safest investment. Invest a part of your cash farm income in a share in America.*
- ★ *Every defense bond bought by an individual is a personal blow against inflation; buying defense bonds is one way every farmer and rancher can fight this threat to our Nation's economic stability.*
- ★ *Defense bonds provide a safe, sure way for farmers and ranchers to build a reserve fund to meet future financial needs—to replace needed equipment, to meet unanticipated personal expenses, to expand farming operations, and to provide an educational fund. Defense bonds are a basic part of a balanced savings program.*
- ★ *Deflation and depression, with ruinous price declines, have been the historic consequences of unchecked inflation. Don't let it happen again. Fight inflation by buying your share of defense bonds.*

**SAVE THE SAFE WAY — BUY A SHARE IN AMERICA**

### ***Pigs Pay***

Two successive short cotton crops in parts of the Southwest are convincing more and more farmers of the necessity of diversifying their farm operations. The addition of livestock to the farm program is an essential part of such diversification. To date, cattle have been the first choice of most farmers, probably because they are more familiar with the problems of raising cattle and because, traditionally, the area has been a "cattle country."

Hogs also are a satisfactory livestock enterprise for many farmers in the South, according to A. D. Fitzgerald, associate animal husbandman of Louisiana State University. In a recent bulletin entitled "Pigs Pay," he points out why most farmers will find it profitable

to include hogs in their farm program: first, only a small initial investment is needed to get into the hog business; second, this investment can be turned over rather quickly, since less than a year is required to produce a marketable hog; third, hogs make more efficient use of more crops and waste products than any other kind of livestock.

The more humid areas of the Southwest have certain advantages over other areas in production of hogs. The relatively mild winter climate is favorable for raising early spring pigs which can be marketed in August or September, when prices are usually highest. Year-round pastures also can be used to reduce feed costs, and the development of high-yield-

ing hybrid corn for this region makes possible the production of an ample supply of feed.

As a result of these factors, the hog business has become big business in parts of northern Louisiana and east Texas. Many farmers now keep a few brood sows and "feed out" the pigs raised by these sows. This provides an additional source of income with only a small increase in labor requirements. Other farmers have found that they can buy feeder pigs in May, turn these pigs into the corn fields when the corn begins to mature, let the hogs harvest the corn crop, and sell in August and September, when hog prices are usually highest.

This "hogging-off" process has brought about a new way of measuring corn yields, and it is not uncommon to hear a farmer speak of the number of pounds of pork per acre rather than the number of bushels of corn. The practice has several advantages, one of which is the low labor requirement, inasmuch as the hogs require very little care and the job of harvesting the corn is entirely eliminated. Most farmers sow soybeans with their corn, thus providing a protein supplement along with the corn. When a mineral mixture is provided in a self-feeder, the hogs can balance their own ration.

In discussing the practice of "hogging-off" crops, Mr. Fitzgerald points out that good-quality pigs will gain from 1½ to 2 pounds per day and that they will consume from 7 to 8 bushels of corn for each 100 pounds of weight added. Thus, an acre of corn producing 45 bushels, with a good stand of soybeans, should produce about 600 pounds of pork. The amount of corn required to produce 100 pounds of gain can be reduced somewhat by including an animal protein, such as tankage or meat scraps, in the supplement.



Just as in the cattle business, there are two methods of obtaining "feeders": to buy them

on the market or to raise them. Most hog producers in the Southwest follow the practice of buying feeder pigs weighing from 80 to 100 pounds. These feeder pigs are bought in May shortly before the corn is ready for "hogging-off" and then sold when they reach the weight of about 200 pounds.

This method has the advantage of eliminating care of brood sows and little pigs but has the disadvantage of increasing the risk of disease and unthrifty animals. Feeder pigs assembled from several farms or bought through a public market may have picked up cholera, stomach worms, or may develop digestive troubles which sometimes cause serious losses. Moreover, it is frequently difficult or impossible to find sufficient feeder pigs of desirable quality.

These facts are encouraging many farmers to grow their own feeder pigs. Such a program involves keeping an adequate number of sows throughout the year to provide enough pigs to "hog-off" the corn produced. These sows require some labor throughout the year and must be given careful attention at farrowing time. However, with this method of producing pork, it is possible to follow a rigid program of sanitation and to inoculate all hogs against cholera and reduce to a minimum the risk of loss due to disease and parasites.

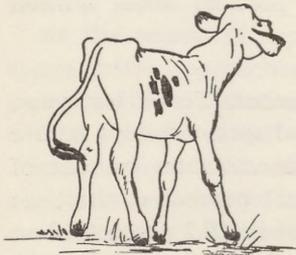
Mr. Thompson points out that the hog producers who follow this method of pork production should become thoroughly familiar with the problems involved in feeding, breeding, and caring for brood sows. Each brood sow and her litter will require from one-half to an acre of good pasture, and some grain must be fed while they are nursing the litter. Following good management practices which will insure large litters (six or more) of strong, thrifty pigs that will grow rapidly is the secret to profits in this type of operation.

With the rapid strides being made in increased production of corn and other feed crops, more farmers in the Southwest may

find it profitable to give consideration to hog production.

### *Next Year's Calf Crop Endangered*

The dry weather and intensive heat that have prevailed over much of the Southwest this summer may have an adverse effect upon next spring's calf crop, according to U. D. Thompson, assistant extension animal husbandman of Texas A. and M. College.



The prolonged hot, dry weather has reduced range and pasture feed, and Mr. Thompson points out that breeding cows that are not getting enough feed now

to maintain their own body weight are not likely to produce healthy, vigorous calves next spring. Since the calf crop is their chief source of income, cattlemen should give careful attention to the cow herd at this time.

In order to carry breeding stock through this critical period, Mr. Thompson recommends that livestock producers give supplemental feed to their breeding herds until pasturage again becomes available. Many feeds can be used, but Mr. Thompson recommends that the daily ration contain 1½ to 2 pounds of 41-percent protein cake and 2 to 5 pounds of green, leafy hay. Also, bone meal and granular stock salt should be available at all times.

Silage, Sudan, or Johnson grass or other temporary grazing can also be used as a substitute for part of this ration. Mr. Thompson points out that it is essential that the cows get some green feed or yellow corn in order to insure an adequate supply of Vitamin A.

Although supplemental feeding adds greatly to the cost of raising cattle, these costs may be small compared with the loss in income that may result if next year's calf crop is reduced materially in size or quality.

### *Inoculate and Fertilize Winter Legumes*

An essential step in planting legume seed is to mix the seed with a commercially prepared inoculant just before planting. The inoculants, which are gelatin-like substances, contain nitrogen-fixing bacteria which must be present in the soil if the farmer is to gain the maximum benefit from the legumes.

Here's why inoculation is so important. The air above every acre of land contains about 35,000 tons of free nitrogen. In this state it is totally useless to plants, but when converted to another form of nitrogen and placed in the soil, it becomes readily available to all plants just like any commercial nitrogen fertilizer. Nature has given legumes the power to take this nitrogen from the air and put it into the soil. However, the nodules formed on roots of legumes by the nitrogen-fixing bacteria provide the power to transfer this nitrogen from the air to the soil. The plant furnishes the necessary energy for the bacteria, and the bacteria use this energy to "fix" the free nitrogen from the air.

Unless these nitrogen-fixing bacteria are already in the soil or are placed there through the use of an inoculant at the time the legume seed are sown, this process will not take place and much of the value of the legume will be lost.

Inoculating legume seed is a very simple and inexpensive process and can be done easily in a tub or other large container. The manufacturer's directions should be followed carefully, and under no circumstances should the inoculated seed be exposed to bright sunlight before planting. Sunlight tends to kill the bacteria in the inoculant.

Commercial fertilizers are also recommended for legumes in most areas of the Southwest. The exact kinds and amounts vary with the different soil types, but usually from 200 to 400 pounds of a fertilizer containing

phosphate and potash but little or no nitrogen is recommended. On very infertile soils or badly depleted land a complete fertilizer, such as 5-10-5, should be used.

By using the fertilizer attachment on the grain drill or row crop planter, the fertilizer can be applied at the same time the legume seed are sown, thus lowering costs and placing the fertilizer where it is readily available to the plants.

### *Treat Oats with Ceresan*

Seed oats, whether resistant or nonresistant varieties, should be treated to prevent smut, according to A. E. Schlehuder, agronomist at Oklahoma A. and M. College.



New Improved Ceresan or Ceresan M is recommended and should be used at the rate of  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce per bushel. The use of this chemical, if directions are followed carefully, will

control not only smut but also other seed-rotting organisms in the soil, according to Mr. Schlehuder.

Care should be taken to avoid overtreatment, especially if the operation is done a month or two before seeding, as the seed germ can be destroyed by the use of too large a quantity of the chemical. However, the seed should be treated at least 2 weeks before planting, in order that the fumes of the chemical will have time to be dispersed throughout the grain.

### *Chemical Sprays for Maturing Rice*

The uneven ripening of rice fields is a constant problem to rice growers, as the immature kernels in the harvested grain raise the moisture content to a point where artificial drying becomes necessary. If combining is delayed until all kernels are ripe, there is con-

siderable loss of early matured heads and kernels due to shattering during harvest, birds feeding on the ripe grain, and stormy weather.

Science now appears to have a solution to the problem in the form of chemical sprays, which when applied to matured fields hasten the ripening of green kernels. Application of these sprays a few days before combining causes immature kernels of rice to mature quickly and enables the grower to harvest a crop uniformly ripe and much lower in moisture content than is possible under normal conditions.

In tests near Beaumont, Texas, last year, application of chemical sprays 4 days before combining reduced the moisture content of the grain from about 23 percent at the time of application to as low as 16.2 percent when combined. Grain from check plots which were not sprayed still tested 23-percent moisture at the time of harvest.

Chemicals used in these tests included sodium T.C.A., dinitro, sodium pentachlorophenate, and sodium monochloroacetate. They were applied with an airplane and tested on Rexark, Nira, and Blue Bonnet varieties of rice.

These preliminary tests indicate that benefits from such treatment include: (1) uniform moisture content of grain over the entire field; (2) killing of weeds, thus eliminating high-moisture weed seeds and vegetation; and (3) easier combining, because the upper leaves of the rice plants are killed.

Careful analysis of the rice grain that was sprayed revealed no injury to seed germination and no presence of sodium monochloroacetate. Growers who are interested in trying these new sprays can secure additional information from the Texas Agricultural Experiment Substation at Beaumont, Texas.

The *Agricultural News Letter* is prepared in the Research Department under the direction of CARL H. MOORE, Agricultural Economist.