

# 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

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### *Meeting This Winter's Feed Requirements*

Winter feed supplies for southwestern livestock are the lowest in many years, as a result of the prolonged drought. Reserves of cured range feed, as well as supplies of hay and other roughages, are virtually nonexistent or depleted in most communities. Reducing the number of livestock to meet this short feed situation is made more difficult by the weak-to-lower cattle prices that have prevailed during the past several months.

Under such conditions, there is a strong temptation to overgraze pastures which may be revived temporarily by showers and to underfeed breeding stock in an effort to avoid further liquidation of herds. Experienced stockmen have learned that such practices are false economy. Heavy grazing of the new growth of grasses recovering from drought may take the remaining vitality from the plants and cause them to die.

Failure to feed breeding stock adequately during the winter months results in fewer calves, lighter weights, and slower gains in weight. Severe underfeeding may result in death losses of cows at calving time. Thus, attempts to save money on feed result in even greater losses in returns the following year.

Results of trials at agricultural experiment stations, as well as experience of successful livestockmen, suggest a few rules to follow in preparing for this winter.

◆ Cull herds severely. Sell all nonbreeders and weak or unhealthy animals, as they will be expensive to keep through the winter, and

it will be more profitable to sell them now if feed is short.

◆ Plant supplemental pasture. Sow as much acreage as will be needed—one acre or more per cow in most areas—or as much as moisture conditions will permit. Grazing can reduce the cost of wintering cattle by as much as \$24 per head and sheep by as much as \$10.

Prepare a seed bed before rains occur and “dust in” small grains. This will give grazing from 2 to 4 weeks earlier than if the operations are delayed until after a rain—assuming, of course, that moisture is received this fall.

E. M. Trew, associate agronomist for the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, recommends the following crops for winter pastures:

East Texas—oats, barley, rye, or ryegrass, with vetch or crimson clover.

Gulf Coast—oats, barley, or Italian ryegrass, with hubam or Madrid sweet clover.

Blacklands and Grand Prairie—oats, barley, wheat, or Italian ryegrass, overseeded with hubam or Madrid sweet clover.

West Cross Timbers—oats, barley, wheat, or Abruzzi rye, with hairy vetch or overseeded with hubam or Madrid sweet clover.

Rolling and High Plains—wheat, oats, barley, or rye, with Madrid sweet clover.

Rio Grande Plain and Edwards Plateau—oats, wheat, or barley, with hubam or Madrid sweet clover.

◆ Purchase feed now. Buy sufficient feed to meet minimum requirements for the winter. Feed prices usually are lowest at harvest time. Include some high-quality roughage for breeding cows and ewes, such as green, leafy alfalfa or peanut hay, to insure ample Vitamin A and calcium. Provide about 2 to 2½ pounds of cottonseed cake or other protein supplement per beef cow per day and ¼ to ½ pound for each ewe daily until green grazing is available.

◆ Keep a mixture of minerals available. Livestock should have access to this mixture at all times. Use equal parts of salt and bone meal for average conditions and add ground limestone if no legume hay is available. In some communities, "trace elements" should be included, and information on them can be obtained from county agricultural agents.

Dairymen will find the quantities of feed suggested above inadequate for dairy cows. From 10 to 20 pounds of good-quality hay will be needed daily for each cow if pasture is not available. In addition, a protein supplement and some grain should be fed. Winter pastures are especially valuable to dairymen, for they can reduce feed costs 50 to 75 percent, as well as increase milk production. Every effort should be made to provide some grazing throughout the winter.

### *Laying Flocks Should Be Culled Now*

Careful culling of the laying flock at this season of the year will eliminate many birds which would be unprofitable to keep during the winter. Birds which lay only a few eggs, or for only a short time, are a liability to the poultryman.

Mr. Cecil Ryan of the Texas A. and M. Poultry Department suggests that the culling operation be done as quietly as possible in order to avoid upsetting the birds. Chickens are highly excitable, and if the culling operations result in too much disturbance, the birds may stop laying for several days.

Mr. Ryan says that the culling can be done a little at a time by keeping a catching hook in the laying house and picking out culls as they are spotted during the feeding period. Another method is to use a small hurdle or fence to catch a few birds at a time in a corner of the laying house. Still another method preferred by some poultrymen is to use a flashlight and do the work at night, while the birds are on the roost.

Only healthy, vigorous birds should be kept. A strong head, bright eyes, a long, flat, broad back, and a deep, full, well-rounded breast are indications of good layers. If the poultryman has not had experience in culling chickens, it would be well to consult the county agricultural agent or other poultrymen in the area who can give additional suggestions in culling the flock.

### *Increase Egg Production With Lights*

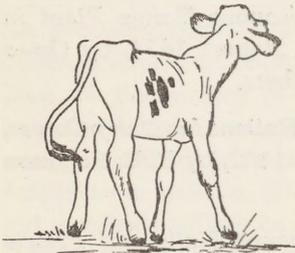
Egg production during the fall and winter months can be increased substantially by use of artificial light in the laying house, says W. J. Moore, poultry husbandman for the Texas Agricultural Extension Service. High production is especially important in October, November, and December, as egg prices are usually highest during these months.

Artificial lights should be used to lengthen the working day for the poultry flock to from 12 to 14 hours. Mr. Moore says that this many hours of light each day are needed for maximum egg production. The lights may be turned on either in the morning or evening, whichever is more convenient. Two 25- to 40-watt bulbs for each 400 square feet of floor space should be provided and placed so that the light falls on the birds, feeders, and waterers. Mr. Moore cautions poultrymen to dim the lights a few minutes before turning them off, if they are used in the evening. This will give the birds time to get on the roost before the laying house is completely dark.

## Costs of Raising a Dairy Calf

Many dairymen feel that they can buy replacements for their dairy herds cheaper than they can raise them. However, R. E. Bureson, Extension dairy husbandman at Texas A. and M. College, points out that it is possible to raise a calf from birth to calving time for as little as \$125 to \$150.

Mr. Bureson also says that raising replacements is one of the most certain methods of building a high-producing herd. Through the



services of artificial breeding associations, virtually every dairyman can make use of some of the best dairy bulls in the country. This enables him to build a high-producing

herd, even from a relatively low-quality herd of cows. Moreover, such a program reduces materially the danger of introducing mastitis and Bangs disease into the herd.

Raising dairy calves requires careful attention to certain feeding principles, and Mr. Bureson recommends that dairymen obtain as much information as possible on the care and feeding of calves before starting their own program. Texas Extension Bulletin No. B-178 gives considerable information on this subject. Experienced dairymen in any community are also a good source of information.

## Farm Leases Need Revision

Many farm leases in operation in Texas are based on customary cash-crop farming systems and do not fit the conditions brought about by a shift to livestock, says C. H. Bates, farm management specialist for the Texas Agricultural Extension Service.

Mr. Bates suggests that this fall is a good time to review the lease arrangement and make necessary revisions to bring it up to date. A friendly but frank discussion of the

farm program for the coming year will be beneficial to both landlord and tenant. Items such as needed repairs to buildings, fences, additional pasture renovation or improvement, and the sharing of expenses and income are a few points to be considered. Sometimes it is helpful to have a third party, such as the banker, county agricultural agent, or other mutual friend, sit in on the discussions. This third person frequently can make suggestions that neither the landlord nor the tenant would feel free to make.

Mr. Bates mentions that there are several publications available from county agricultural agents that may be helpful in drawing up a satisfactory lease. Among them are suggested lease forms and a bulletin entitled "Rental Arrangements for Progressive Farming."

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*Winter legumes increase the following year's crop yields. They also reduce soil erosion during the early spring months. Perhaps most importantly, experiments show that water infiltration on land previously seeded to a winter legume is from 2 to 12 inches per hour faster than on land on which a legume has not been grown.*

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## Get Your Fertilizer Now

In view of the large anticipated demand for commercial fertilizer in 1953, M. K. Thornton, Extension agricultural chemist at Texas A. and M. College, recommends that farmers order and take delivery on the amount of fertilizer that they will need next spring.

Such action will enable fertilizer manufacturers and mixers to move present supplies to the farmers. In many years the plants are forced to shut down because their storage bins become filled to capacity. Then, during the spring season, supplies are exhausted or cannot be moved to the farmers rapidly enough to meet the demand.



Mr. Thornton recommends that the fertilizer be stored in a well-ventilated barn or shed. The bags can be stacked directly on a wooden floor, but it is advisable to place boards on cement floors before stacking the sacks of fertilizer. If they are protected properly from moisture during the winter months, there will be no rotting of sacks or deterioration in the value of the fertilizer.

### *Progress in Pink Bollworm Control*

Scientists at the Department of Agriculture's Brownsville, Texas, laboratory are testing hundreds of chemical compounds to determine their possible use in control of the pink bollworm. These chemicals are designed to be absorbed by the cotton plant and kill the insects when they feed on the plant. They are called "systemic" insecticides.

Workers at the laboratory have found several organic phosphate compounds that will destroy pink bollworms through systemic action. However, additional research must be carried out to prove that they leave no chemical residue in cotton fiber or seed which would be harmful to men or livestock.

Other problems yet to be solved include correct dosages, methods and time of application, and costs. This type of insecticide has the advantage of being unaffected by rain and winds, which wash and blow away dusts and sprays. Moreover, the systemics kill the pink bollworm inside the cotton squares and bolls, which cannot be reached by other insecticides.

Cotton farmers of the Southwest will be watching developments in this field with a great deal of interest, in view of the widespread infestation of pink bollworms that has been reported this year.

### *Publications*

New Mexico Agricultural Experiment Station, State College:

*Cotton Variety Tests, 1948-1951*, Press Bulletin 1074, by A. R. Leding.

Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, College Station:

*Wheat Production in the Panhandle of Texas*, Bulletin 750, by Kenneth B. Porter and others.

*Peavine — A Poisonous Range Plant in Texas*, Progress Report 1474, by Omer E. Sperry and others.

*Dried Skimmilk in Rations for Dairy Calves*, Progress Report 1482, by R. E. Leighton and J. S. Huff.

*Finely Ground Peanut Hulls and Prairie Hay in Rations for Fattening Steers*, Progress Report 1483, by J. C. Williams and others.

*Cost of Handling Texas Citrus, Fresh and Processed, 1950-51 Season*, Progress Report 1485, by H. B. Sorensen and others.

*Sources of Cotton Labor, Texas High Plains*, Progress Report 1491, by Joe R. Motheral and others.

*The Use of Gypsum in Soils*, Press Bulletin 1070, by H. E. Dregne and C. W. Chang.

*Precipitation and Sorghum Yields*, Press Bulletin 1069, by Morris Evans.

*Desirable Grasses Increase after Post Oak Control*, Progress Report 1448, by Vernon A. Young.

Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, Richmond, Virginia:

*An Agricultural Man in Your Bank*, by Horace G. Porter and Stuart P. Fishburne.

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