

# Agricultural

## NEWS LETTER

FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF DALLAS

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DALLAS, TEXAS

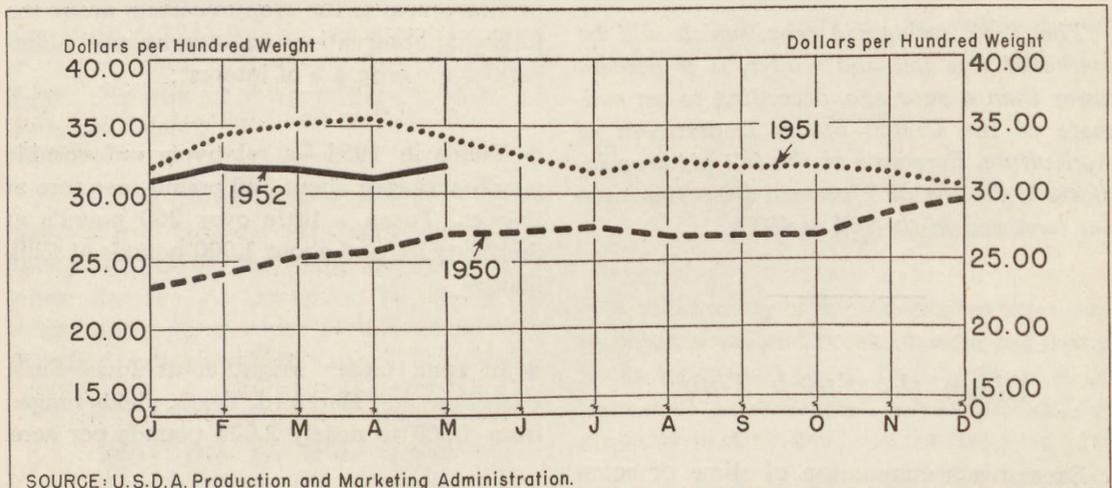
July 15, 1952

### Feeder Cattle Demand Weakens

Reports from the Corn Belt states indicate that the demand for feeder cattle this fall may be somewhat weaker than in most recent years. Narrower feeding margins and reduced reserves of feed grain supplies have cut sharply into profits from cattle feeding operations during the past two seasons.

The uncertainty of the feed situation is an important factor in the prospect for a lower demand for feeder cattle. Reserve stocks of feed grains are now at relatively low levels, and unless a bumper corn crop is produced this year, the supply of feed grains may be rather tight this fall and winter. Shorter feed supplies probably will be a factor in reducing cattle feeding operations next year.

On the supply side, cattle numbers in the Nation are now at a record high level, and the increased production from these higher numbers probably will be felt on the markets this year. Substantial liquidation by southwestern farmers and ranchers during the past year, due to the severe drought conditions, may sharply reduce the number of cattle marketed in the Southwest this fall. In fact, if good, soaking rains occur throughout the Southwest between now and November 1, considerable restocking may be undertaken by southwestern cattlemen. However, the increased numbers in other parts of the country are likely to provide as many or more cattle for the Nation than were marketed during the fall months of 1951.



SOURCE: U. S. D. A. Production and Marketing Administration.

*This chart shows average prices for feeder and stocker cattle at Kansas City for selected years. The price increase during the last 3 months of 1950 was due partly to the general inflationary trend of all prices which prevailed at that time.*

In addition, some thin cattle may be imported from Mexico if the embargo is lifted on September 1, as currently planned. These prospective imports from Mexico will be offset at least partially by the loss of about 500,000 head normally imported from Canada (imports from that country have been banned since the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease earlier this year).

All of these facts would seem to indicate that price trends of feeder cattle during the fall marketing season may be somewhat on the weak side. A review of prices paid for feeder cattle during the past 5 years shows that in 1947, 1948, and 1951, prices were generally lowest during October, November, and December. In 1949 and 1950, the lowest point was reached in September, and prices during the last 3 months of the year rose moderately.

In summarizing the situation, a marketing specialist from Purdue University states that the demand for feeder cattle this fall is expected to be weaker, resulting in lower feeder cattle prices. He also states that this appears to be a year in which feeder cattle prices will weaken as the marketing season progresses.

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*The 1952 spring pig crop, which will be marketed this fall and winter, is 9 percent lower than a year ago, according to an estimate of the United States Department of Agriculture. Forecasts of the fall pig crop indicate a decline of 9 percent from the number farrowed in the fall of 1951.*

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### *Clean the Stock Tank*

Excessive accumulation of slime or scum in the stock tank can be removed by adding the proper amount of copper sulphate, according to M. K. Thornton of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service.

The copper sulphate, sometimes called bluestone, can be purchased from drug stores, and the proper amount should be dissolved in a small wooden or enamelware container before adding it to the stock tank or pond.

Mr. Thornton points out that adding too much of this material to the water can make it injurious to humans, livestock, and fish. Therefore, considerable care should be exercised in treating the water.

Mr. Thornton recommends 8 pounds of copper sulphate to each 1,000,000 gallons of water, 1 ounce to 8,000 gallons, and 1 teaspoonful to 1,500 gallons of water.

More detailed information can be obtained from local county agricultural agents or by writing the Texas Agricultural Extension Service and asking for Bulletin L-55.

### *More About Castor Beans*

The rapid increase in the use of castor oil in industry has stimulated more than a casual interest in the production of castor beans in the Southwest. In view of this and the relative profitableness of the crop in certain areas, the following observations on experimental plantings of the crop are of interest:

◆ Yields in 1951—a relatively unfavorable year—averaged about 330 pounds per acre at Denton, Texas, a little over 200 pounds at Stephenville, and about 1,000 pounds at Chillicothe.

◆ In tests under irrigation at Iowa Park, Plainview, and Hereford, Texas, yields ranged from 1,000 to nearly 2,000 pounds per acre.

◆ At Chillicothe, the crop showed no response to applications of potash or phosphate fertilizer, but the application of 60 pounds of nitrogen increased yields nearly 100 percent.

◆ Castor beans have been grown at the Iowa Park experiment station during 6 of the past 12 years, and average production, under irrigation, was 1,034 pounds per acre.

◆ At the Chillicothe station, under dry-land conditions, average production during 7 of the past 10 years was 894 pounds per acre.

From this information, specialists conducting the tests state that, under normal conditions, yields of from 800 to 900 pounds per acre can be obtained on soil that would ordinarily produce about 200 pounds of lint cotton per acre.

On sandy soils of low fertility, yields of about 500 pounds can be expected, while under irrigation or on land of high fertility, yields of from 1,200 to 1,800 pounds per acre are not unusual.

Mechanical harvesting of the crop in 1951 was not very successful in the Vernon-Chillicothe area of Texas. The stripping machines available removed the beans from the plants, but field losses due to shattering were high. Improved harvesters are being constructed and should be available for use this year.

The average charge for harvesting on a custom basis in 1951 was \$6 per acre. The price of castor beans is supported by the United States Department of Agriculture at about 10 cents per pound.

One of the unusual characteristics of castor beans is that virtually all insects apparently have a dislike for the plant and cause only minor damage. An exception to this is the striped army worm, which sometimes destroys the plants in the seedling stage.

### **Hay for \$7 Per Ton**

A Titus County, Texas, farmer produced hay on an old Bermuda grass pasture at a cost of less than \$7 per ton in 1951.



In the fall of 1950 this Bermuda grass pasture was renovated, manured, and fertilized with 500 pounds of 0-14-7 commercial fertilizer per acre. The following July, ammonium nitrate was applied at the rate of 150 pounds per acre. The total fertilizer cost was \$6.40 per acre, and within a month after the application of ammonium nitrate, 3,280 pounds of hay were harvested per acre.

A part of the pasture received no nitrogen, and this area yielded only 1,440 pounds of hay per acre. Moreover, the protein content of the hay harvested on the fertilized area was considerably higher.

A small part of the pasture received ammonium nitrate at the rate of 300 pounds per acre, and the yield of hay on that area was 4,840 pounds per acre.

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*All insecticides are poisonous. Farmers are warned to keep these materials labeled properly and to follow manufacturers' directions carefully. Effective use of insecticides requires that the proper chemical be applied at the right time and at the recommended strength.*

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### **Power-Operated Stalk Cutters More Effective**

A wide variety of implements has been used to knock down and break up corn and cotton stalks following harvest, and for many years these stalks were burned in order to facilitate preparation of the seed bed the following year.

In more recent years it has been shown that this crop residue is a valuable material to return to the soil, since it adds organic matter and helps to maintain the fertility of the land.

Tests by the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station indicate that the rolling-type stalk cutters do a fairly good job of breaking up dry and brittle stalks but frequently have little effect upon green cotton plants. In these tests only a small percentage of the plants was cut more than once, and seed bed preparation following their use was difficult.

Several power-operated stalk cutters are now on the market, and most of these, when properly operated, do an excellent job of shredding both dead and green stalks into fine pieces.

Some of the factors to be considered in evaluating a particular brand of stalk cutter are: the ease of operation (including leveling of the machine and lifting of the knives or beaters while turning), shields to prevent accidents from the rotating blades, and maintenance costs for keeping the machine in good operating condition.

### *Bees Increase Seed Yields*

Yields of clover seed in fields adequately stocked with bees averaged 26 times greater than yields in areas from which bees were excluded. These results were obtained in tests at the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station's Bluebonnet farm in McLennan County, Texas.

The value of bees in pollinating clovers and other legumes to increase seed production has been recognized by most farmers, but these tests give additional proof of the importance of bees in the production of legume seeds.

Yields of seed in the areas that were screened off to exclude the bees ranged from 11 pounds of Madrid sweet clover per acre in 1950 to 130 pounds in 1951. This indicates that the sweet clover is self-fertile, to a limited extent. Yields in the open areas to which bees had free access ranged from 202 pounds per acre for Madrid sweet clover to 373 pounds for Evergreen sweet clover.

Another interesting fact revealed by these tests is that bees ranged up to 3 miles from the hives in search of honey. Even when there were several hives located in adjoining fields with ample bee pasture nearby, the bees readily visited other fields located within their flying range. They appeared to distribute themselves rather evenly throughout all of the fields in the immediate vicinity, regardless of the number of colonies in any particular field.

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*An essential step in a farm safety program is the placing of first-aid kits in convenient locations around the farm and home.*

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### *Publications*

Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station,  
Baton Rouge:

*Hay Is What You Make It*, Agricultural Extension Publication 1115, by Mansel M. Mayeux.

*Land Clearing Tools and Methods*, Agricultural Extension Publication 1116, by Mansel Mayeux and A. S. McKean.

New Mexico Agricultural Experiment Station,  
State College:

*Combinations of Corn Silage and Coarse Alfalfa Hay for Fattening Lambs*, Bulletin 369, by P. E. Neale and Marvin Koger.

*Seed Treatment for Control of Damping-off in Peanuts*, Bulletin 370, by R. F. Crawford.

*The Effect of Fertilizers on Yield and Botanical Composition of an Irrigated Pasture Mixture*, Press Bulletin 1068, by A. D. Dotzenko and M. L. Wilson.

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