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September Jobs on the Farm

The month of September is of special significance to farmers in the Southwest, for many operations that are of vital importance to next year's, as well as this year's, operations should be carried out during the early fall months. In more southern areas the critical period usually is earlier, and in the High Plains, many of the operations are delayed until October or even November. But the month of September for the majority of farmers in the Southwest is the climax of this year's operations and the beginning of preparations for next year.

Harvesting of this year's cotton crop is the predominant operation throughout a large part of the Southwest during September. This year the crop gives promise of producing fairly satisfactory yields in a large area of the Southwest, and many farmers are harvesting their first full crop in 3 years.

Cotton specialists point out that many dollars can be saved by giving proper attention to the methods of harvesting cotton. It is especially easy to become lax and careless in harvesting the crop when production is abundant. But efficient growers will make sure that the cotton is picked only when it is dry and that every effort is made to keep the seed cotton as free as possible from foreign material.

Sticks, leaves, dirt, and even pieces of small equipment frequently get into the load of seed cotton and reduce the quality of the final product because of the difficulties in ginning dirty cotton. Some farmers feel that modern gin equipment will turn out a clean sample from even the dirtiest seed cotton. Improved gin machinery can do an almost unbelievably thorough job of cleaning cotton; however, it is still true that care in harvesting can reduce the need for additional cleaning in ginning and in this way enables the ginner to turn out an even better sample.

If mechanical pickers or strippers are used, they should be in proper working order. The operators should be familiar with the use of the machine and follow the manufacturer's directions in its operation.

Stalk Destruction

Following harvest of the cotton crop, the stalks should be cut or shredded with a mechanical shredder and plowed under immediately. In parts of Texas, cotton stalk destruction is required under the Pink Bollworm Control Program prior to certain dates, varying from August 31 in the Lower Rio Grande Valley to October 31 in the area around Austin. However, stalk destruction and plow-up is a recommended practice in all areas because it is one of the more effective and economical methods of controlling cotton insects. Such a practice also returns crop residue to the soil, thus adding organic matter, which in turn increases the soil's water-holding capacity and fertility.

Records of many years have shown that when early cotton stalk destruction is carried out on a community-wide basis, insect infestation is reduced substantially the following season. The boll weevils and bollworms, particularly, are deprived of their food supplies and forced into winter hibernation in a weakened condition. Hence, a fewer number of them emerge the following spring.

In areas where cotton harvest cannot be completed prior to the first frost, the stalks should be shredded and plowed under as deeply as possible immediately after harvest.

Planting Legumes

September is also the month for planting legumes in a large part of the Southwest. Many farmers follow the practice of planting a legume as soon as cotton stalks have been plowed under. This is particularly desirable on farms where soil erosion is a problem, as the legume crop will reduce erosion from both water and wind, as well as provide a cover crop to be plowed under the following spring. This addition of organic matter is a vital step in building soil fertility.

If growing conditions are favorable, considerable pasturage also may be available from the legume crop during the winter months. County agricultural agents, ginners, and other local leaders can give suggestions as to the legume to be planted, as well as fertilizer recommendations for the particular area.

All legumes should be inoculated, to insure that the nitrogen-fixing bacteria are present in the soil. Otherwise, the legume will not be able to convert free nitrogen from the air to nitrogen that will be available for succeeding crops.

Planting Small Grains

Seeding of small grains, such as wheat, oats, and barley, already is under way in many parts of the Southwest, but additional acreage will be seeded during the next 2 to 3 months. Small grains, either alone or in combination with a winter legume, provide one of the best sources of late-fall, winter, and early spring pastures. All small grain seed should be treated with ceresan or other mercurial dust to control smut. Such treatment also will control the relatively new disease of helminthosporium blight, which caused considerable damage to oats last year.

Inventory Feed Supplies

If it has not already been done, September is a good time for livestock men to inventory their feed supplies for the coming winter. Every effort should be made to provide grazing throughout the year, but experience has shown that almost every year some supplemental feeding will be required. Dry weather may prevent proper growth of winter pastures, and severe storms during the winter months may necessitate supplemental feeding.

A supply of hay, silage, and other feeds should be obtained that will be reasonably adequate to carry the livestock through until spring grazing becomes available. Usually, feed can be purchased much cheaper at this time of year than when drought or storms hit and all livestock men are in the market to buy feed. Moreover, local supplies may become temporarily exhausted at such times, causing shortages that will result in weight losses of livestock, as well as higher prices for the feed.

Planning for 1954

It seems especially important this year that landlords and tenants work out mutually satisfactory plans for their 1954 programs, in view of the fact that acreage controls will be in effect on wheat and peanuts and probably cotton. County agricultural agents, vocational agriculture teachers, bankers, and others in the community can offer assistance and guidance in working out landlord-tenant agreements that will enable the farm organization to include a well-rounded program of cash crops, legumes, feed crops, and livestock.

Lice on Sheep and Goats Needless Expense

Reports from the sheep- and goat-raising country of Texas indicate that many animals are infested with lice, according to F. M. Fuller, assistant Extension entomologist of Texas A. & M. College. Mr. Fuller points out that control measures should be applied immediately, in order to stop damage to wool and mohair and as a feed conservation practice. Animals infested with lice are restless, do not eat normally, and do not utilize feed efficiently, says Mr. Fuller.

The types of lice which attack sheep and goats ordinarily spend their entire life on the bodies of the animals. The eggs are laid in the fleece and attached firmly to the fibers close to the skin. They hatch within 7 to 14 days, depending on the temperature, and the parasites are spread from one animal to another.

Infestations can be detected readily, since the adult lice can be seen easily, and if they are present, it usually is safe to assume that eggs and young lice also are present.

The best time to apply control measures is immediately after shearing the animals while they are still in the pen, since better coverage of the insecticides can be obtained when the animals are practically free of wool and mohair.

Either sprays or dips can be used effectively. For spraying, Mr. Fuller recommends using solutions containing one of the following: .06 percent gamma BHC, .5 percent chlordane, .5 percent DDT, .06 percent lindane, .5 percent methoxychlor, .5 percent TDE, or .5 percent toxaphene. If the animals are to be dipped, the same insecticides are recommended, but the dosages or percentages of each should be cut in half. Methoxychlor or lindane should be used on milk goats. A single dipping should completely eliminate the lice, says Mr. Fuller.

Sheep and goat producers can obtain from their county agricultural agents copies of the *1953 Guide for Controlling External Parasites of Livestock and Poultry in Texas.* The guide also lists amounts of insecticides needed to make the required solutions for controlling not only lice but also many other parasites. The publication is available without cost.

Controlling Fowl Typhoid

Careless disposal of dead birds is one of the more serious problems in the control of typhoid in chickens and turkeys, according to Dr. Hugh Cartrite, poultry pathologist of the Gonzales, Texas, Experiment Station. Birds which die from typhoid harbor the germs for many weeks and should be burned or buried promptly to avoid spreading the disease.

Fowl typhoid, which continues throughout the life of the bird, is a serious poultry disease in many Texas counties. A careful testing program of all breeding flocks should be followed, in order to detect typhoid carriers, and these birds should be removed immediately from the flock.

Dr. Cartrite says that one practice that will help to avoid fowl typhoid is to keep the birds from drinking from mud puddles and surface tanks.

New Device for Cleaning Cotton

A "recipro-cleaner" for cleaning cotton during the ginning operation has been perfected by engineers of the United States Department of Agriculture.

The new cleaner is built in as a part of the gin stand commonly used in upland seed cotton ginning. Hence, no other machines are required for the cleaning process, and very little additional power is used, according to C. E. Severance, assistant engineer of the Louisiana State University Agricultural Extension Service.

In laboratory tests, the "recipro-cleaner" has taken out up to twice as much leaf trash, stems, sand, and other foreign materials as other gin-stand cleaning equipment currently in use, with no harmful effects upon quality of the cotton fibers. The cleaner works equally well on any type of rough-harvested seed cotton, whether it is stripped, machine-picked, or hand-harvested.

Use of Soil Conservation Equipment Not Expensive

Soil conservation districts are able to provide farmers with a wide variety of equipment for use in conserving their farm land, says W. L. Ulich, agricultural engineer of Texas A. & M. College.

Such equipment as rotor cycles, cattle spray machines, drills, sub-soilers, and manure spreaders is available, on a custom basis, through many local soil conservation districts. The farmers are charged only for the amount of time they use the machinery; therefore, they can have the use of many types of machinery, some of which they need for very short periods during each year, without the expense of buying such machines.

Quality Seed Pays

Progressive farmers recognize that the kind and quality of seed they plant largely determine the value of the crop they harvest. Experience has taught them that "cheap seed" is the most costly seed they can buy.

Recleaned, refined, tested, and tagged seed is the most economical to use, as it gives reliable crop insurance at a low cost.

Among the more important qualifications of good seed are:

- Adapted variety
- High-yield records
- High quality of seed
- High seed purity
- Small total weed seeds
- Freedom from noxious weeds
- High germination
- Freedom from diseases

The cost of seed is very small in relation to the expense of land preparation; therefore, it is false economy to risk a poor stand or invite an infestation of weeds or disease when high-quality, scientifically recleaned seed can be purchased at only slightly higher prices than original country-run or rough-cleaned seed.

Publications

Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station, Baton Rouge:

Control of Bloat Through Management Practices, Circular No. 38.

Mechanization of Cotton Production, Southern Cooperative Series, Bulletin No. 33.

Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station, Stillwater:

Treating Farm Pond Water for Domestic Use, Bulletin No. B-408, by Elmer R. Daniel.

Mechanization of Cotton Production, Southern Cooperative Series, Bulletin No. 33.

Copies of the bulletins may be obtained by request to the publishers.

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