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ABOUT THE FARM ---

By John J. Inskeep, County Agent

Soil Tests and Recommendations Prove an Interesting Assignment

If the number of soil samples submitted to our office for test in the State Laboratory at Oregon State college during the past month are any indication, we are to see a banner year for application of limestone to Clackamas county soils. We think the increased number over last year is a matter of significance. We understand that the laboratory at Oregon State college in February alone tested more samples than were tested during the entire 1953 year.

At least a portion of the reasons for this interest may be due to Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation ruling that the government will not share in cost of the purchase of limestone without a soil test by the State Laboratory and final recommendation by an Extension agent. But this fact alone cannot account for the increased interest in liming. The others we shall not dwell upon here.

As the matter now stands all reports of laboratory tests are referred to the County Extension office for final processing and recommendations regardless of federal cost sharing. This processing is adding an additional load on a very busy staff in the Oregon City office. But it is an important matter and any delay is certainly not due to failure to expedite the final processing here.

Reasons Why
But why is it necessary to provide final processing in the County office? Why isn't the test itself sufficient? There are several reasons.

Before making an intelligent recommendation it is necessary to know the soil series involved, past fertilizer history, past cropping program and expected future cropping program. County Extension workers are better acquainted with local conditions than those in a distant laboratory.

It is not enough to suppose that certain elements can be added to give maximum results regardless of the crop to be grown. Different crops may require different methods of fertilization. For instance, fertilizer recommendation for oats, strawberries and alfalfa are each entirely different. Regardless of soil tests, alfalfa will grow on a few selected soils only. It is useless to try to grow alfalfa on other regardless of the kind and quantity of fertilizer used. Soil testing and resultant recommendations is not an exact science.

History Important
Past cropping history is important. For instance, a soil which has been badly handled needs more than application of fertilizers to bring it back into good production and to protect against erosion.

And finally, actual figures as shown by test are confusing to those who are not working with this sort of thing more or less constantly.

Reading all of these tests with consequent recommendations could be an onerous task for one not interested in the subject. Actually we find this an interesting assignment and very educational.

One afternoon last week we interpreted and made recommendations for 23 separate tests. Passing before our eyes was a running history of the use, abuse and improvement of Clackamas County soils.

This discussion turns our thoughts back to the time when we had virgin soil. How many times have we heard individual operators extol the virtues of "new ground" like we found when grandfather obtained a donation land claim?

Illustrates a Point
Herewith hangs a tale which illustrates a point. Back in West Virginia, where we were raised, the spring farm auction sale is, or was, an annual economic and social event. It has been said that a jug of corn squeezings passed from hand to hand back of the barn enlivened the bidding. Those who tripped in excess sometimes became a bit quarrelsome. On this particular occasion a few fistcuffs followed the passing of the jug. A character of our acquaintance came out second best in the hassle.

He took it in good fun and remarked as he brushed himself off, "I guess I ain't the man I used to be."

His teenage son who had watched the proceedings with more than passing interest replied, "Sometimes, Pap, I think you never wuz."

Well, these soil tests indicate that some of our soils never wuz what we thought them. Sure these new soils have fine structure, but some of the tests we scrutinized last week indicate

very low mineral content. For instance, one sample taken from newly cleared land in the foothills area showed the need of six tons of ground limestone per acre. The same sample showed only 4 pounds of available phosphoric acid per acre. By contrast, samples from other farms with a good soil building history showed 160 pounds of available phosphoric acid per acre.

Soil Analysis
Another foothill sample in a different location on land long farmed, showed the need of only 3 tons of limestone per acre because an application of limestone was made five years ago. But here again the analysis showed only 4 pounds of available phosphoric acid. The point here is that no program of soil building without inclusion of an ample supply of phosphoric acid could be expected to produce good yields, regardless of the crop to be grown.

A third interesting analysis was made from a sample taken from a field heavily cropped to strawberries and row crop vegetables for years. Prior to that grain farming was practiced. The state of fertility in this case was so low that a minimum of six tons of limestone per acre is needed as the first rebuilding step. The phosphate level was low also but the potash level high. It was our suggestion, in this particular case, that no substitute can be found for seeding this area to grass for adding organic matter and improving structure.

Only a few of the samples studied last week showed low potash contents. One of them was taken near Wilsonville. The samples reported above illustrate some of our worst problems. As a whole these soil tests illustrate the fine conservation program practiced by Clackamas County farmers during the past twenty years.

"I found six-foot bunkers the answer to the hay wastage problem around cattle feeding racks", Bill Tucker, Springfield, told us during a recent

visit to his cattle spread. "A bunker of this depth prevents fighting on the part of mature cows feeding on opposite sides of the rack. A cow disturbed by another cow while eating make a quick grab at the hay, turns her head or steps back and drops a portion of the hay she picked up."

He then proceeded to prove his point. Bill has a few of the shallow old bunkers still in use. Around them we found evidence of much wastage. But, around the new six-foot outfits there was little evidence of hay wastage.

"These deeper bunkers have another advantage", Bill continued. "Even a large bale of hay fits into them crosswise. Our racks are roofed and portable, you will notice. When loading them with a new supply of hay, we fill them full crosswise, and remove the wires. No shaking or fluffing is necessary."

For wintering beef cows Bill feeds good green alta fescue straw and a little grain. His cows are big and fat. He thinks he might substitute some cottonseed meal for grain another winter.

We still subscribe to the old home town West Virginia paper, the "Hampshire Review." Many of our boyhood acquaintances have long gone to their rewards, but a few remain and many interesting local events are reported. Right now that area is undergoing a rabies epidemic of serious proportion. Strangely enough this outbreak started among foxes. These rabid animals have bitten many farm animals, cattle and dogs mostly, and several people. Two women have been attacked as they stepped to the porch.

An intensive fox eradication program has been under way and all farm dogs have had preventive shots. Excuse please—we made a mistake. In our column of two weeks ago we said, "Extension Agent, Clive Cook, recommends top dressing fall sown grain with nitrogen prior to the middle of March. Most fields will respond best to application of from 30 to 60 pounds of actual nitrogen. This means 150 to 300 pounds of ammonium nitrate. When using ammonium sulphate apply half again as much. Grain may lodge when too much nitrogen is used on fields high in natural fertility."

The line reading "This means 150 to 300 pounds of ammonium nitrate" should have read, "This means 75 to 150 pounds of ammonium nitrate."



Chevrolet's new Delray Club Coupe, introduced this year, is upholstered in grain leather vinyl, an easily cleaned plastic that is waterproof. This swimmer has no fear that her sopping wet bathing suit will mark or spot the car's colorful cushions or interior trim.



INDIAN BRAVE?—White man take-up Indian scalp. Sitting courageously in a barber chair at Fort Meade, Md., is Navajo Indian Private Zahay Horses Son, of Martins Ferry, Ohio. He volunteered to receive his first hair cut in 12 and one-half years.

Greenbacks from GREEN FORESTS

PAYROLL

CASH CROPS

RECREATION

S

Mill payrolls, taxes paid by forest industries, wood harvests, useful forest products—all can be counted up in hard cash. It's harder to put a price tag on recreation—fishing, hunting, picnicking—and harder still to compute in dollars and cents the vital part forests play in soil and water conservation. Green forests make our community, our state and our country strong, prosperous and beautiful. Keep them that way by being careful with fire while you're in the woods.

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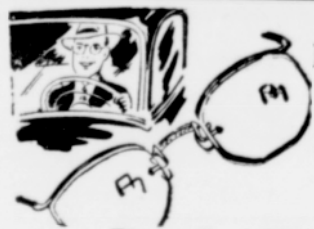
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