

Willamette Valley Farmer

News and Views of Farm and Garden—BY LILLIE L. MADSEN.



Shown here are Floyd T. Fox and his new \$1250 yearling Suffolk ram which he bought at the recent Salt Lake City show. Mr. Fox says the ram has been on range for two months and doesn't look all he is worth but his sire is imported direct from England and his bloodline is among the best. There are now something over 200 head of registered Suffolk on the Fox ranch in the Silver Cliff area above Silverton.

Alta Fescue Wins Praise as Lawn Grass in East

Alta fescue, Oregon's gift to the nation's forage needs, is finding surprising popularity as a lawn grass in some of the eastern states.

Harry A. Schoth, federal agronomist at the state college, who developed the grass at the agricultural experiment station. The front lawn at the government research center at Beltsville, Md., has been seeded to alta fescue and is doing well, reports D. V. Lumsden, chairman of the grounds improvement committee.

"After leveling, the lawn was limed, fertilized and seeded to alta fescue. Few grasses will produce satisfactory lawn turf on our gravel pile. Alta is deep-rooted and stays green during dry weather without irrigation. It also keeps weeds out without chemical treatment," writes Lumsden. In Oregon, other fescue and bent grasses have been favored for lawns, says Schoth, although alta is now being used by some school districts to provide tough turf for playing areas around school houses. It is also being used extensively here and elsewhere for grassing airplane landing strips.

(Additional Farm News on page 9)

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Farm Homes Not Too Far Behind Others

Naturally, there are many parts in rural America which are not modernized, even in Oregon, and even in the Willamette valley, but cities, also, even in Oregon, have their poorer districts, and the poorer districts in cities are just as squalid, if not more so, than the poorer sections of farm communities. At least the air is better in the country.

These remarks were made by a farm housewife as we sat talking in a comfortably-fitted farm kitchen, equipped with hot and cold water, electric range and water heater, electric refrigerator and every other convenience you would find in a well-arranged city home.

I had seen a story on a report prepared by former Secretary of Agriculture Claude Wickard, which was read recently to the joint senate-house agricultural committee by Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Charles F. Brannan. The report didn't seem to fit rural Willamette valley as I knew it, so I took to the outer-edges in the hills above for further investigation.

Farm Homes Criticized

Wickard described the "typical American farm house" as being "old, in bad shape of repair, without running water, telephone, central heating or a bathtub. The windows and doors are poorly screened. Flies attend every meal, spring and summer. There are mice in the kitchen and rats around the barns."

Judging from the rat poisoning campaigns being carried on in cities, said the first housewife I interviewed on the farm, the country rats had mostly moved to town as the rural folk had long ago rid their farms of most of the rats.

When Brannan drew sharp criticism from members of congress, he defended the report on grounds that it was drawn from statistics of the bureau of standards from the 1940 census.

The report also drew heavy criticism from the Willamette valley, where statistics show the "typical farm house" described by Wickard to be the exception and not the rule.

Electricity Widely Used

Frank Starrett, division manager of the Portland General Electric company, points to his own books to show that 95 per cent of the farms in the Willamette valley served by his company have electricity in the house and other farm buildings. Starrett added that he was quite sure that the percentage runs equally high in the territory served by Mountain States Power company to the south and west. Of the five per cent receiving electricity from power companies, one-fourth per cent have plants of their own.

While the Willamette valley farmers do not feel Wickard's report is a true picture of even 1940 here in the valley, men in key positions point out that no report given as facts should be made now based on 1940, as progress has been rapid in the past seven years.

People are prone to forget that electricity and electrical appliances are not old, in either town or country. Commercially, electricity is but 71 years old. The first Edison electric lamp was invented in 1878. Electric ranges were first developed around 1912. The first electric line extension into rural territory in Oregon was in Hood River in 1906, and first extensions out of Salem was in 1912. Between 1914 and October 1, 1947, the Portland General Electric company alone built a total of 3,961 miles of rural lines.

Jardine Heads Committee To get back a bit to 1913: This was the first committee on Relation to Electricity to Agriculture was formed with James Jardine, director of the experiment station and dean of agriculture at the state college, was its chairman. It was the purpose of his committee, composed of representatives of the college, leading farmers, equipment manufacturers and representatives of electric companies, to finance experimental applications of electricity in agriculture. Automatic electric water systems, small feed grinders which could be operated by three or five horsepower motors, electric ranges as we know them today, electric milking machines, electric cream separators, all have



Pictured are M. Dorgan and his three-year-old granddaughter, Deana Dorgan, who are happy over the new electric line extension to the former's home in Crooked Finger area. Mr. Dorgan is the farthest out customer on the new nine-mile line. The two are pictured here in the doorway of the completely modern barn which houses a number of registered Herefords and several dairy cows.

been developed on the farms in the past 24 years.

No less recently than in 1935, when electric extensions were made in rural areas, the question was asked if the power was to be used for anything other than lighting the house and barn, for if so, heavier wiring would be necessary. Today that question is not asked as it is known that as soon as the power is available, the other equipment will be added also as soon as it is available.

Many Refrigerators

In 1940, 25 per cent of the Oregon farm homes had mechanical refrigeration of some sort. The estimate is 50 per cent now, and steadily mounting. In 1940, only five per cent of farm homes in Oregon cooked by electricity. Starrett said that at least 75 per cent of farmers who are putting in electricity plan to add electric ranges.

In 1940, 46 per cent of the farm area in Oregon had telephones, a ratio running about the same in the country as in the city. Since then this has increased 10 per cent, and will increase more as soon as materials are available. Managers of telephone companies report there are many requests for rural telephone extensions, as well as for telephones along those already built. But the lines in use are now heavily loaded and equipment for new lines has been very difficult to obtain.

I followed a line of new electric poles out over a road this week into the Crooked Finger area. For nine miles this new extension climbed up into the foothills until it ended at a 1600 foot elevation. Only one small farm house lay beyond the extension.

Farm Home Attractive

At the very end of the line, lived M. Dorgan and his family. They came here 20 years ago and bought a 260 acre farm. Things, including the road, were very different then, said Dorgan. The barn is now completely electrically equipped. The family was sitting about listening to the radio when I arrived. The farm house is old, but the interior is very attractive.

"We had planned to build this fall, but couldn't get around to it," Mr. Dorgan told me. "But we will build this spring and then the house will be completely electrically equipped."

Of the 38 families on the new line, all but three already had electric radios. Twelve have both electric ranges and water heaters, and purchases of ranges are steadily mounting. Fifty per cent have refrigerators. Water systems are being added as rapidly as possible. In about 99 per cent of

POTATO MEN TO REPORT

County agents are asking potato growers or prospective growers to write or telephone information about acreage of potatoes grown prior to 1948. The department of

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agriculture has announced that price support for 1948 Irish potatoes will be limited to the goal potatoes will be eligible for price support.



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