

# 2015 Celebrate National Ag Day

## AG THROUGH THE YEARS

### Extension journals keep tabs on Grant County's producers

Blue Mountain Eagle

From squirrels to transportation to weeds to profits, the challenges facing agriculture in Grant County weave some common threads through the years. Following are excerpts taken from OSU Extension Service agent journals, which paint a picture of life in the rural county.

**Dec. 1, 1926 to Nov. 30, 1927**

Grant County is naturally handicapped for shipping facilities, thus concentrated products are the only ones produced here to advantage. Beef cattle, wool, lambs, and butter fat are the county's important exports. On account of high railroad transportation, grain, hay fruit, and potatoes cannot be profitably shipped out of here.

The Grant County Court started County Agent work in this county in 1925 for the express purpose of getting rid of squirrels that were greatly on the increase. The County Agent was wanted by the County Court, but a good many ranchers who had children that were making money under the old bounty system were not very enthusiastic about the County Agent idea.

**Dec. 1, 1929 to Dec. 1, 1930**

The outlook for County Agent work in Grant County is good... The Agent has progressed from a mere 'squirrel catcher,' as he was first looked upon, to a general advisor on livestock, drops and soil problems.

With sheep and cattle comprising 75 percent of Grant County's agricultural income, the livestock group is the group that should receive at least that share of the program. But, on the other hand, very likely 15 percent of the remaining 25 percent bears directly on those interests for support. Hay and grain is all consumed locally by sheep, beef and dairy cattle.

Therefore, the owners of our 29,000 head of cattle and 99,800 head of sheep must get the major attention. There are 626 ranchers in the county, and their total agricultural wealth, including livestock, building and equipment, according to the census, is something over ten million dollars.

**Dec. 1, 1938 to Nov. 30, 1939**

Considering the fact that 57.2 percent of the area of Grant County is public lands, mostly national forest; that



County Agent R.G. Johnson Jr., circa 1930.

Contributed photos/Extension Service

42.8 percent is privately owned farm land, and only 5 percent of this being tilled, it is likely that Grant County will continue to be essentially a livestock producing area.

United States agricultural census figures show that numbers of cattle in Grant County have been increasing for the past 10 years, with 86.5 percent of the 1926-1930 average cash farm income derived from animal products and 77.5 percent directly from livestock and livestock products. A continuation of this situation is probable for an indefinite period.

New infestations of noxious weeds appear each year and, unless ranchers are made "noxious weed conscious," will become a serious problem. Every effort will be made to organize ranchers to control and eradicate existing infestations of perennial noxious weeds, which include morning-glory, white-top, Russian knapweed, and Canadian thistle.

**Dec. 1, 1940 to Nov. 30, 1941**

Winter feeding of livestock in Grant County has been on a very limited scale due largely to the fact that concentrates must necessarily be shipped in with a high freight rate involved. Several ranchers, including the J.S. Guttridge Estate, Prairie City; John Silvers, John Day; W.E. Stockdale, and John Damon, Mt. Vernon; have shown good returns from winter feeding of steers when fed homegrown grain and hay.

With ranchers in the John Day Valley showing a gener-

al interest in improved crop rotation, which included the growing of some grain, the feeding of a larger number of steers will be made possible.

The noxious weed problem is being held at a minimum with land owners cooperating in nearly all cases of noxious weed infestation. Every effort should be made to continue this program, and an endeavor made to keep ranchers "noxious weed conscious", and also to encourage the efforts of the State Highway Department and other public agencies in a control program.

**Dec. 1, 1946 to Nov. 20, 1947**

The diversity of wartime controls affecting the production and marketing of agricultural commodities has brought a steadily increasing number of farmers to the County Extension Office for assistance with their problems.

It is apparent adjustments must soon be made on cropping practices and in the utilization in the privately and federal owned rangelands, if the county is to prosper. In the years immediately previous to the war it was apparent to agricultural leaders as evidenced by the County Planning Committee that the numbers of livestock were getting out of balance. This condition is the result of several factors, the largest percentage of which has been a reduction in the numbers of sheep. Livestock units in the county may continue to decline for some time, at least until education teaching with respect to range management has made itself felt.

**Dec. 1, 1947 to Nov. 30, 1948**

There has been a great deal of erosion control done on range land. Most of the ranchers are beginning to realize that the best way to protect their range lands from eroding is to make sure that a good stand of grass is maintained.

The County Agent was re-elected Secretary of the Monument Soil Conservation District and has worked very closely with the supervisors and soil conservation employees. Monument Soil Conservation District consists of the original District and three additions, namely, Dayville, Round Basin and Izee. The District now takes in a strip about one-third the width of the County across the west end.


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School children earned prizes - four watches and 85 pounds of bananas donated by Canyon City Commercial Company - for their part in a squirrel killing campaign.

### Holliday Land & Livestock

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