Blue Mountain Association Handles Much Union Stock

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Union County Agent

The Blue Mountain Livestock Association was organized in January, 1932, and incorporated in March the following spring under the leadership of H. G. Avery, County Agent. This organization grew out of the successful "lamb pools" first started in Oregon by the Union county agent in 1930.

At the end of the first year the association had a membership of 132 producers who shipped a total of 4001 sheep and 2771 hogs, at a total saving in handling costs to the growers of $2,239.95. The total association marketing costs, including an estimated value of shrinkage at $4.00 per hundred, amounted to .8139 cents per hundred.

The officers of the newly organized association were: T. B. Johnson, president; F. G. Pottratz, vice-president; H. G. Avery, secretary-treasurer; and the directors, John Schroeder, D. McDonald, Mike Royes, Dillard, Choate and John Waelty.

The value of the marketing association to the county may be illustrated by the statement of one commission man made in 1936 at the North Portland market, who said; "Union county hogs were pretty common in 1932, but are now the best hogs that come to town."

The ninth year of operation of the Blue Mountain Livestock association appears to find the organization still in a strong position in spite of competition from drect pecker-buyers and two weekly auction sales. The association provides a weekly sale for approximately 80% of the hogs, a considerable number of cattle, and 90% of the farm sheep which are shipped to outside markets, principally Portland. Growers may ship one head or many, any Saturday and receive payment direct by check and also an accounting by grades for the shipment by the following Wednesday morning.

The membership has increased each year until it now is 437. The county agent served as secretary-treasurer until 1938, when Miss Mildred Wardell, secretary in the county agent's affice was hired by the association at part time for this work.

Marketing costs for handling of stock are financed by assessments against total sales, as follows; hogs, 10 cents per 100 pounds; cattle, 7 cents per 100 pounds; and sheep, 11 cents per head. Each car load is handled as a separate pool. Settlement with handling charges deducted is mailed direct to individual shippers by the commission company, with a complete statement of sales and expenses.

Losses are handled on a mutual insurance plan. All animals which are crippled or die from the time stock is delivered at the loading station are paid for out of funds received by the association for handling charges. In this way livestock is fully insured and the cost is much lower than if commercial insurance were purchased.

Since carlots on the Portland market commonly sell for around 25 cents per hundred more than small lots, the total gain by this method of marketing represents a considerable margin of profit for the grower.

In 1940 there were 8441 hogs shipped, 800 cattle, and 2051 sheep, with a total volume of business for the year at $163,736.67.

The present officers of the association are; John Waelty, president; John Schroeder, vice-president; Mildred Hyde, secretary-treasurer; and the directors, W. H. Woodruff, Clyde McKenzie, Chris Johnson, Sr., R. S. French, John Waelty and John Schroeder.

Each year the association holds an all day annual meeting in January, at which time the association serves a free dinner to all members. The attendance last year was 195. The program consists of a report on the association's activities for the year and outside speakers discussing livestock feeding, management and handling practices.

EXCESS SMUT KILLS STOCK

Fossil.—Smut can be deadly to livestock as well as to growing crops. Frequent rains resulted in badly smutted cheatgrass and cattle feeding on it has resulted in some deaths.

SHERMAN COUNTY EXPERIMENT FARM

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duced an average yield of 24.6 bushels per acre, land plowed medium early, 23.5 bushels per acre and land plowed late in the spring (the first of June), 18.8 bushels per acre. Land double disked early in the spring and plowed the first of June has produced an average yield of 23.7 bushels per acre. Disking stubble early in the spring just before plowing, early or medium early, has not increased the yields over land not disked. Another experiment in which the land is plowed 5 inches deep and 10 inches deep, with different cultivation treatments of the summer fallow has been continued since 1914. In these experiments the land plowed 10 inches deep has produced an average yield of .8 of one bushel per acre more than the land plowed 5 inches deep.

On years when winter wheat is weedy, harrowing in the spring has shown beneficial results. However, on a long time average the yield of winter wheat harrowed in the spring has been 23.3 bushels per acre while wheat not harrowed produced 23.5 bushels per acre.

New tillage practices have become necessary since the coming of the soil conservation program. Farmers are now advised to leave on the land during the fallow season the crop residues (such as wheat straw) produced by the previous crop. This very important problem is now being subjected to carefully conducted research. Three types of straw utilization are being compared; first, the land is plowed with a moldboard plow, burying all of the straw; second, plowed with a wheatland disk plow, leaving the straw mixed in the top few inches of soil; and third, plowed with a duck foot plow, leaving all the straw on the surface.

The adjusting of farm machinery to work with trashy summer fallow is also being considered.

4. Crop Rotation Experiments.

The crop rotation experiments which were started in 1912, are still being continued. This type of experimentation becomes more valuable with advancement in years. The results show that for the growing of spring grains, a cultivated crop like peas can be introduced into the rotation profitably, but for winter wheat a rotation including cultivated crops has not been as profitable as alternating winter wheat with fallow. Spring wheat-peas, has been one of the high yielding rotations over the period the experiments have been in progress.

5. Soil Fertility Problems.

It has been known for some time by agronomists and soil scientists that the fertility in the form of total nitrogen and organic matter was gradually but surely being depleted from the wheat growing soils of eastern Oregon. From a study made on representative soils from several locations in Sherman county in 1935 by the Sherman branch experiment station, it was found that these soils which have been cropped to wheat over a period of fifty years had lost 22% of their total nitrogen and 26% of their organic matter from the first foot. This means that our average soils have lost approximately 747 pounds of nitrogen, and 17,700 pounds of organic matter per acre from the first foot because of soil eroding elements and continuous cropping to wheat. It would cost $84.00 per acre, or more than three times the assessed valuation of the average land, to buy the nitrogen alone as commercial nitrogen fertilizer to replace this loss. This is plainly not a possible solution to this important problem of soil fertility. The question is then asked, "How can we maintain and build the fertility and physical properties of our soils?"

Soil building crops will have to be grown in rotation with soil depleting crops if we are to maintain the nitrogen and organic matter content of our soils. No agriculture in the history of the world has remained on a permanent basis without such a system of crop rotations. To achieve this end the station is comparing the standard wheat-fallow rotation with three modified rotations including alfalfa, alfalfa-grass mixture and grass alone followed by several years of wheat-fallow. Through yield data and soil analyses the soil buildnig qualities of these rotations will be evaluated.

6. Fertilizer Experiments.

The results to date on the application of commercial fertilizers to wheat grown after fallow indicates that at Moro no profitable increases in yields can be expected from the application of commercial fertilizers. The application of 100 pounds per acre of sulfur has given good results three years of the ten this exeriment has been in progress. Profitable results from light applications of a nitrogen carrying fertilizer on stubbled-in wheat can be expected.

7. Soil Moisture and Soil Nitrates Studied.

Soil moisture tests have been made since 1919. From these tests data has been obtained which shows the importance of subsoil moisture in the production of wheat under dry-farm conditions in eastern Oregon. The value of early plowing and clean tillage is definitely shown when moisture tests are made on the differently tilled plots. The project also shows the effect of soil treatment on the accumulation of nitrates in the soil. It has been found that wheat of poor quality and low yields is produced on land low in available nitrogen at seeding time. It has also been shown that excessive amounts of available nitrogen may cause too rank a growth and bring about a burning effect. This is often the case in years when the moisture supply in the soil is below normal. In order to obtain maximum yields and good quality wheat, cultivation methods which will bring about the desired balance between soil moisture and soil nitrates should be employed.

8. Economic Substitute Crops for Wheat.

Several new crops which might be grown as substitutes for wheat are being tested at the station each year. Among the crops, other than grasses which have been under trial the last few years are: Seed flax, commercial mustard, safflower, soybeans and chick peas. The results obtained are not conclusive but the more promising of these crops appears to be commercial mustard and safflower. These crops produced an economical yield at the station this past year.

9. Tree Culture.

Many trees such as Russian Olive, Caragana, and Western Yellow Pine have been grown at the station successfully for shade and wind break purposes. Many other species of trees and shrubs are under trial to determine which can best withstand the dry weather. Trees and shrubs add much beauty to the homestead as well as offer protection from the wind.