Lakeview Soil District Experimenting With Grasses For Better Use

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LAKEVIEW—This is the first in a series of articles aimed at presenting some up-to-date information on grasses and legumes adapted and being used within the Lakeview Soil Conservation District. Both the local Soil Conservation Service and the Extension Service are cooperating in establishing trials of range and pasture plants. These trials are useful in determining such factors as season of use, adaptability, growth habits, seeding rates, and production.

Because of the large number of grasses and legumes, it would be impossible to cover each and every one of them. Instead only those adapted here are discussed. Information has not only been gathered from specific trials, but also from the many landowners who are utilizing these plants in their operations.

Pubescent Wheatgrass: Topar pubescent wheatgrass is a drought-resistant, slow sod-forming, late maturing wheatgrass. It resembles intermediate wheatgrass but has soft hairs on the leaves, stems, and seed; hence its name. It is best adapted to areas of low fertility, eroded or slightly alkaline soils, in areas of 12-15 inches of rainfall. It has a later season of use than crested wheatgrass, being ready for use in early summer.

There have been several good plantings of pubescent wheatgrass. Con O'Keeffe on the Wetside seeded a large area this past spring to pubescent wheatgrass and Ladak alfalfa. From all indications, it looks like a tremendous success for a dryland seeding. Another dryland seeding which has been in for several years is to be found on the Roy Griffin ranch in Crooked Creek. Originally established in the fall of 1952 as a seed increase planting, this was seeded in 36 inch rows. In 1956, a total of 185 pounds per acre of clean seed was harvested. And after six years, the plants still show good vigor. Andy Hill, George Hill, 70 Ranch, Bill Pfrang, Ernie Giersdorf, and others have successful, productive stands of pubescent wheatgrass. It is one of our more important, better adapted dryland grasses.

Crested Wheatgrass: This grass has probably had more publicity than any other range grass. It is a longlived perennial bunchgrass. It starts growth very early in the spring but is dormant during the summer. Growth begins again in the fall when moisture is available. Established stands of crested wheatgrass remain productive for 10-15 years when they are managed properly. It is adapted to low rainfall areas with 8-12 inches of rain annually. On shallow soil, crested wheatgrass can be used in areas with up to 16 inches of rain. Experiments from the Squaw Butte Experiment Station have shown that an application of 30 pounds of nitrogen per acre has doubled the yields of crested wheatgrass. Fertilization also helps keep the sage brush from coming back.

There are several good seedings of this grass within the Lakeview Soil Conservation District. Harold Shults has a productive crested-alfalfa seeding. Bill Pfrang has planted large areas to crested wheatgrass. Greatest use of this grass has been in the Fort Rock-Silver Lake Soil Conservation District.

Whitmar Beardless Wheatgrass: This grass has had to take a back seat to crested wheatgrass, however, it is one that is worth discussing. It is a long-lived perennial, drought resistant grass with similar adaptations as crested wheatgrass. However Whitmar's season of use is much later. One of its disadvantages is its slowness in becoming established. Whitmar has consistently outproduced crested wheatgrass in low rainfall years and under other adverse conditions. The palatability of these two grasses has shown to be equal in feeding trials with sheep.

Ira Bolton, farmer on the Westside, has a small field of Whitmar which is being grown for seed. The big disadvantage with the harvesting of seed however, is its ease of shattering. A common method to offset this is to cut the grass when it is green, dry it in the shock, and thresh it.

Siberian Wheatgrass: This is essentially an awnless form of crested wheatgrass. It was introduced from the same general area in northern Asia. It has narrow seed heads and somewhat narrower leaves and finer stems. On dry sites and in dry years, it equals or exceeds crested wheatgrass in production. It too responds well to nitrogen fertilizer. Tehre are no known seedings of this grass within the Lakeview Soil Conservation District.

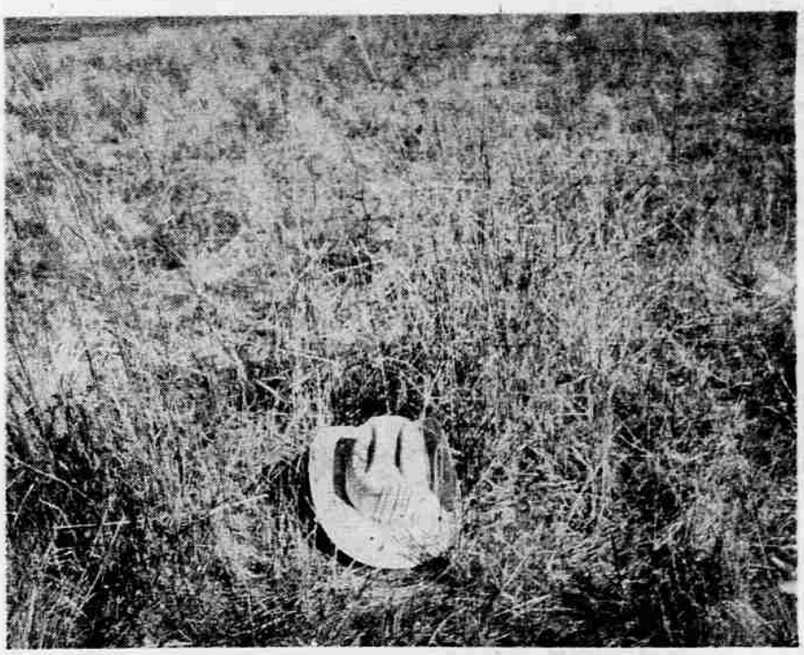
Sherman Big Bluegrass: Though well adapted to this area, this grass has not become too prominent. Originating from Sherman County, Oregon, it was selected from more than 100 other big bluegrass strains because of its outstanding early spring growth. In a grazing program, it should be used earlier than crested or Whitmar. Sherman big bluegrass is slow in becoming established but is one of the most productive range grasses under low moisture and drought conditions. A bunchgrass it grows well on a variety of soils at elevations of 800-6,000 feet in a 10-20 inch rainfall area. Production results from Washington show that over a four year period, Sherman big bluegrass out produced crested and Whitmar in seed, hay, and roots. Local small trials tend to bear out these Washington results. A fine example of a Sherman big bluegrass planting can be found on Jim Snider's ranch south of Lakeview. Because of the need for early feed in this area, many ranchers feel that Sherman big bluegrass will outdo crested wheatgrass.

Ladak Alfalfa: Probably the most widely adapted legume for dryland seedings in Ladak alfalfa. It originated in the high mountain country of Asia, and has the ability to withstand wide extremes in temperature and moisture. It is well adapted for dryland seedings within the Lakeview Soil Conservation District, and is widely used for hay or dryland and irrigated farms.

Nomad Alfalfa: One of the creeping alfalfas, Nomad is well adapted to this area. It is drought resistant, has moderate wilt resistance, and its creeping habit enables it to persist well under grazing. Ernie Giersdorf has a seeding of Nomad and pubescent wheatgrass which is worth mentioning. Bill Pfrang and the 70 Ranch also have Nomad plantings.

Nomad offers excellent possibilities as the best legume to use with crested or pubescent wheatgrass on dryland seedings.

Additional information may be obtained by contacting either the local Soil Conservation Service or the county agents office.



PUBESCENT WHEATGRASS AND LADAK ALFALFA. This is one of our best dryland range combinations. Makes good hay or pasture. This pasture could stand some more grazing.

CRESTED WHEAT SHOWING UNDERGRAZING. The dry grass in the clumps will prevent cattle from making proper use of this planting another year. Crested wheat should be used early. It can be grazed down rather closely if stock are removed in time for it to recover before hot, dry weather sets in. In fact this is the best way to use it. This field should be clipped in order to prepare it for effective production next year, otherwise, the big clumps will get bigger and the grazed bunches will be over-used.

— Photo by SCS

SLICK CHICKS

STORRS, Conn. (UPI) — Get slick, chick, or it's the sack. That's the word around the barnyard these days. Poultry Scientist Edwin P. Singsen of the University of Connecticut, has laid out a controlled-feeding schedule for hens to hold down their weight and make them more productive. Those who get too hefty get the axe. Singsen explained that the heavy meat-type White Plymouth Rocks used as layers to produce broiler-type chicks live longer and produce more eggs under this new feeding schedule. Fat hens do almost as well so far as egg-laying is concerned, but on an unrestricted diet they have "lower efficiency" and their eggs are not as healthy as those from lean hens.

ON THE MOVE

NEW YORK (UPI) — One out of every five persons in the U.S. one year old or over will have changed his place of residence during the year ending October 31, 1958, according to the Gas Appliance Manufacturers Association. It said "the movingest people in the country" are Westerners, 27 per cent of whom pulled up stakes last year. Next came Southerners, followed by residents of the north central states and then those in the northeast.