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Feed for Livestock

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Feed For Livestock

Crops — Livestock — South Dakota

South Dakota is a great agricultural state. During years of normal weather conditions abundant crops of good market quality are produced. The livestock, and livestock products, contribute a major portion of the farm income of the state.

During recent years we all know what kind of crop growing conditions have been our lot. This year we again face a crop shortage, and especially serious is that of feed for livestock.

As crop growers we have dealt with all kinds of weather, crop returns and other farm conditions and we still plan to carry on. In doing so we believe there are certain things that can be done to help redeem the situation. These we have set down in this circular with the help of our State College.

—Statement prepared by a group of South Dakota farmers with years of practical farm experience in this state at a meeting in Huron, June 22, 1933.

What Can Be Done?

At the time this brief circular is issued, in late June 1933, a severe drouth has already destroyed and damaged many acres of our small grain crops.

As a companion to the drouth we have the grasshoppers, in very serious numbers, over a large part of the state. They threaten wholesale destruction of our remaining small grain and corn crop, unless most favorable natural destructive agencies come to our help.

Thus during such times one of the most important problems before the farmer is that of securing feed to carry his livestock. Such a combination as drouth and grasshoppers makes it necessary to do out-of-the-ordinary things to try and secure the necessary Feed For Livestock.

Farmers, stockmen, owners of land, and in fact all of South Dakota business life, ask themselves, and others, "What Can Be Done"? The writers of this circular know full well that nothing they can do will make it rain, or kill off the grasshoppers, and bring about more normal crop growing conditions.

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Such an early "dry-out," with temperatures far above normal is unusual. There is, however, still time enough, with the coming of rains up to mid-July, to plant certain crops and take certain actions with some prospect of results in the way of Feed For Livestock.

Practical Plans Promoted By Farmers

Experienced South Dakota farmers meeting in Huron, June 22, 1933, together with representatives from the Governor's office and others, and in consultation with men from the State College hereby present the following set of Practical Plans:

Managing Fields of Small Grain All fields of the small grains now past the point of usefulness for grain production should be pastured or cut for hay. Grain fields fast approaching this point might better also be used rather than be allowed to dry up. These fields can then be used for disking, be prepared for immediate sowing to "cane" or Sudan grass.

Management of Corn Fields At the time this is written (June 22) nearly all corn fields are still in a normal, or nearly normal growing condition. Such fields, however, as are destroyed, or nearly so, can be used for "cane" or Sudan grass to better advantage than to use the grain stubble land. Even on many fields not normal, grasshoppers still threaten to "take-the-crop," so these fields may still be available for planting to other crops. The land planted to corn will in most cases be in better shape to use as the field to be planted to Sudan grass, "cane," or other catch or emergency crops, than the stubble fields of small grain.

What Crop to Plant

The choice of crops to plant, at this late date and in face of the hordes of grasshoppers, is small. The sorghums, mainly the sweet sorghum or what is commonly termed "cane," and sudan grass are the only ones that can be recommended.

Where the grasshoppers do not threaten to be a problem, or only a slight one, then such crop as the millets, both the hay and grain (proso) types can be planted. Early flint and dent corns may still also be planted. The flint corns seem to have a little more resistance to "hoppers" than the dent corns.

For planting after mid-summer, from August 1st on, winter rye alone, or in combination with oats or barley, for fall pasture is recommended.

Suggestions for Planting These Crops

Many farmers have already done something. Some grain stubble fields have been plowed, some disked. A few have planted "cane" or Sudan grass, and others have their fields ready and are waiting for rain, when they will plant. The wholesale planting of these seeds in dry ground is not recommended. It may prove profitable to have a small acreage thus planted.

Wherever it is possible to prepare the proper kind of a seed bed by disking, instead of plowing, such action is recommended. The costs are less and the work can be done faster. This will get the land in shape for the seed sooner. Sometimes having the field work done, and the seed in the ground before a rain, or immediately thereafter, means the difference between a fair to good crop, a poor one, or a failure.

Sweet Sorghum or "Cane" Sorghum seed should be planted in drilled rows to be cultivated. Some grain stubble fields may be prepared simply by adequate diskings and harrowings. Some may need to be plowed. Prepare the seed bed as much like for corn as pos-

sible. A corn planter fitted with "cane" plates is usually used to plant the seed. A grain drill may be used by stopping up the required number of drill cups. From 3 to 4 pounds of seed per acre are usually required when planted in drilled rows.

When planted late an early maturing type of "cane" should be used. Practically all of the cane seed sold in South Dakota is grown in states south of us. Some of this seed may be too late to mature a crop of fodder before frost. Talk this over carefully with the seed seller before buying. Varieties recommended are Dakota and Red Amber.

Special Notice

Where grasshoppers threaten to do great damage to the corn crop, it is suggested that "cane" or Sudan grass be drilled in between the corn rows. To do this the corn field must be clean.

The idea back of this unusual plan is to get these sorghum crops started with as great a growth to them as possible while the "hoppers" are feeding on the corn.

The sorghums are subject to attack by the "hoppers" while the plants are small—6 to 8 inches and less—but they are quite resistant, except under unusual conditions, when they have more growth.

Thus even amid the "hoppers" the sorghums may get the necessary growth where they are not so attractive to them.

If this plan works it may be the means of getting a stand of sorghum even in the presence of a "scourge of locusts."

Sudan Grass The seed of this crop may be sown broadcast or drilled in solid rows to be cultivated like corn. Under normal crop growing conditions over most of the state, the seed should be planted broadcast. Under our present emergency it is well to give some consideration to planting Sudan in rows for cultivation. A grain drill may be used, after stopping up the required number of drill holes. A corn planter may be used if special plates are available or secured. By this method from 4 to 6 pounds per acre are required.

Sown broadcast, or drilled in like small grain, will require from 20 to 25 pounds per acre. Have the seed bed as fine as possible, also rather firm. Plant not to exceed 1½ inches deep, except in the drier and more open soils.

Use good seed. Insist on knowing the germination. Don't use a class of Sudan seed containing mixtures of "cane" especially if the field is to be pastured.

Grain Sorghums This class of sorghums is planted for the production of grain. During normal years they are not recommended for growing in South Dakota as against corn. They may be planted for fodder, but the sweet sorghums or "cane" are preferred and recommended. If for some good reason grain sorghum is planted use the earliest maturing varieties, namely Feterita and some strain of Milo Maize.

Caution

Sorghums under conditions that retard their natural growth—such as lack of moisture and frost—may develop prussic acid. This is a deadly poison to livestock. Under such growing conditions livestock should not be allowed to feed on green or uncured sorghums. The sweet sorghums, “canes,” and grain sorghums are especially dangerous.

Sudan grass is a form of sorghum. Under natural growing conditions Sudan is a safe crop to pasture and it is recommended for that purpose.

The grain and sweet sorghums are NEVER recommended for pasture. In the form of well cured hay or fodder both crops can be considered safe feed. Thus while there are some drawbacks to these two crops, yet under present conditions they offer “a way through” and must be given careful consideration.

Caution

Millets Where grasshoppers are not present in damaging numbers the foxtail or hay type of millet is recommended for the production of hay. The seed bed should be as fine and firm as it is possible to get it under the soil and moisture conditions at the time of preparation and sowing. The seed must be planted rather shallow. Deeper planting is made when the soil is real dry. The seed is planted with a grain drill or broadcast and harrowed in. Plant from 15 to 20 pounds of seed per acre.

The grain or proso type of millet may be planted for grain production. Cut a little early and given good care, some growers find the “straw” of the plant acceptable forage. It is also subject to destruction by grasshoppers. Because the seed is larger a few more pounds of this seed must be planted per acre than for the hay millets.

Corn Ordinary dent corn may still be planted for fodder in the sections where grasshoppers do not threaten to take the crop. The early flint corns still offer a “chance” for grain production where grasshoppers are not a menace, and where it is desirable to try and produce more grain. The same may be said, in a lesser degree, of the very early types of dent corn. Flint corn has shown more resistance to grasshoppers than dent corn.

Small Grains Winter rye must be kept in mind as a crop to plant for early fall pasture. Some oats or barley may be planted with rye. Plant early. At least one-fourth heavier seeding of these grains should be made for pasture than for grain production. Otherwise their culture is just the same as for a grain crop.

Rape There is a possibility of securing some rape for fall pasture if the summer weather turns cooler than during the past two years. With favorable summer weather there is still time to plant rape in the corn fields that are later to be pastured. The seed may be drilled or broadcast at the rate of 4 to 8 pounds per acre, or put in drilled rows at 2 to 3 pounds per acre. The seed must be planted shallow.