

## Grassland Farming Pays

By A. L. O'FARRELL, Piapot, Sask.

**W**E are told that overgrazing of grasslands has been one of the main causes for the decline of ancient civilizations. Man has had some very pointed lessons on grassland farming so that slowly but inevitably it has been learned that through proper grassland management, feed and food supplies can be made more plentiful and more nutritious. Labor on farms can be reduced. Agriculture can be made more stable. And capacity to serve the needs of the world's growing populations can be increased substantially.

In 1937 Southwestern Saskatchewan suffered severely from a grass shortage. Our pastures, already overgrazed to the danger point, were in no condition to stand the prolonged drought. Whole herds of cattle were moved out of the country to better pastures, or sold outright to the government.

Next year it rained. Grass and fodder grew in abundance. One creameryman made the observation that he was handling more cream than when the country was full of milch cows. "People kept just their best cows last year," he explained. "And now there is lots of feed. Just goes to show what happens when you have plenty of good feed for good stock."

We should have learned our lesson then. It was so obvious that more feed for better cows meant less work for the same returns we had been getting when we kept large herds. But the circumstances of the past year seem to indicate we are again following the same old cowpaths! Habit dies hard.

Mr. P. Janzen, Field Husbandry and Substations, Experimental Farm Service, Swift Current, told the Agricultural District Board Number Ten at their fall meeting in Gull Lake, Sask., "There is not enough good feed to carry the percentage of cattle we now have in the municipalities."

J. I. Clark, Ag. Rep. for District Ten has been warning farmers that this region is building up to the same situation which obtained in the 'Thirties' when herds were too large for the amount of feed available. L. I. D. agent, Jack Bell, Maple Creek, has also expressed concern in this regard. He points out that despite the abundance of feed which could have been put up last fall, much of it went to waste.

Farmers claim they have a safe reserve. They insist that with spring harvesting to disrupt their whole season's work schedule, they did exceptionally well to have the amount of fodder they feel will see them through until

they can put up more.

Yet surveys show that some municipalities in District Ten have from seven to fifteen hundred more cattle than they can expect to graze successfully another year, particularly if there is a shortage of moisture. So far, all signs seem to point to drier conditions for 1953. Field men of the Saskatchewan Agricultural Services believe the reserves of feed here are below what the District should have to meet the situation.

While it is true this condition may not obtain everywhere to the same degree, it is recognized that Southwestern Saskatchewan as a whole should have speeded up its grassland farming operations more than it has. The provincial government has been offering assistance in grass-seeding programs for years. New mixtures have been developed that give excellent results. Yields on our sandy soil are especially high. But except on government projects, grass has not been seeded as extensively as one might have expected. And too often when it is seeded, it is done with a defeatist attitude, — as a sort of last resort with but little hope of success.

J. B. Campbell, Officer-in-Charge, Pasture Division, Experimental Station, Swift Current, tells us that "crested wheatgrass used as a spring pasture in two-crop (spring-summer) rotation with native range can nearly double the grazing capacity of mixed grass prairie in Southwestern Saskatchewan. Increases of sixty to ninety per cent have been obtained, the highest being on land with sandy soil."

Mr. Campbell also points out that an eighteen thousand acre Community Pasture near Swift Current, Sask., where cattle follow naturally the rotation recommended, grazing capacity is twelve acres per animal unit for a six-month grazing season. On adjacent range where no supplementary pasture is provided, some twenty-two acres are needed to produce the feed required for the same period.

Yet, strangely, far too many farmers turn a cold shoulder on any grass-seeding program. Some say it isn't necessary, especially if we get rain. Others declare it is too hard to get a "catch", or that they have to wait too long to get any good out of the seeding. But it has been found that whenever recommended cultural methods have been employed, gratifying results have been the reward. Whenever livestock men carry out a program of grassland farming, they are well paid for their pains.

Perhaps Mr. Fred Kynaston, rancher north of Tompkins, Sask., has the answer when he says, "Do it yourself"! Mr.

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Kynaston is a member of the Agricultural District Board and he believes if the board members are going to get anywhere advocating grassland farming, they have to set an example.

In 1950 Mr. Kynaston did just that. Around the end of October he seeded thirty-five acres of old crop land to crested wheatgrass. Last fall he took off five tons of seed. "I sold two tons for about \$500 and I had only paid \$250 for that quarter of land in the first place," he told the board.

He plans to seed the other three tons of crested wheatgrass because his experience has convinced him that it will pay in feed and seed many times over the trouble of seeding it.

"I know now what they mean when they say there is no such thing as poor soil," Mr. Kynaston remarked. "That quarter of land was considered almost worthless, but just see what it did when put into grass! Do it yourself," he urged, "and you'll learn like I did."

## FRANCIS B. WARD

A former managing director of the Douglas Lake Cattle Co. in the person of Francis B. Ward died at Victoria at the end of April. He was 78 years of age and had been one of Western Canada's best known cattlemen.

Francis Ward was born in Victoria where his father conducted a banking business. Following retirement from school, he went to work in his father's bank but quit the bank for the life of a cowboy. He rode the Alberta range for a time and in 1910 became one of the partners and managing director of the Douglas Lake Cattle Ranch in the Nicola Valley. During Mr. Ward's management, the Douglas Lake Ranch was at times Canada's biggest cattle ranching enterprise and one of the most progressive.

Mr. Ward retired to Victoria in 1940 and spent the remaining years of his life in that City.

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