PROBLEMS IN EVALUATING PASTURES IN RELATION TO OTHER CROPS

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STUDIES of pasture improvement through fertilization and management are comparatively new. Since 1920 a considerable body of data relative to the effect of fertilization and management on the yield, chemical composition, and survival of various pasture crops has been assembled in the United States and elsewhere. Valuable as this early work has been, there is an urgent and ever-growing need for additional information which would permit of an accurate evaluation of pasture crops in relation to each other and to other crops grown as feed for livestock. In general, the pasture agronomist is well fortified with facts and figures relative to increases in production of forage which may be obtained from a well-planned fertilization and management program. However, he is often at a loss to know how best to sell his ideas to those who should be vitally concerned because he cannot interpret his results in terms of relative dollars and cents values. This is due primarily to the scarcity of facts and figures for comparing the relative value of various pasture crops and of pasture crops with other harvested feed crops. Consequently, his work has not found as wide a reception among farmers as the present condition of millions of acres of pasture land would appear to warrant.

At present the number of acres of various pasture crops found on an average farm is determined largely by topography, climate, soil type, and type of farming. In general, the acreage devoted to pasture is not based on the value of pasture in relation to other crops grown on the farm. Agronomists have gone ahead on the assumption that a certain amount of land in pasture makes for greater efficiency in land use. It is the purpose of this paper to present the problems associated with, and call attention to, the need for evolving a technic which can be used in evaluating various types of pasture crops in relation to themselves and to other crops which are grown as feed for livestock. It is only through studies of this type that a proper valuation can be placed on crops which are grown for and harvested by livestock.

PRODUCTION RECORDS NEEDED

On a well-managed dairy farm accurate production records are kept for each of the producing animals. In this way it has been possible to remove unprofitable, inefficient, low producers from the herd. It would appear that the same principle could be made use of in evaluating such pasture crops as Kentucky bluegrass, timothy, alfalfa, sweet clover, Sudan grass, rye, oats, and others in relation to each...

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