MANAGEMENT OF KANSAS BLUESTEM PASTURES
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The Kansas bluestem pasture region has an area of approximately 5 million acres. It occupies a belt varying in width from 25 to 100 miles extending north and south across the western side of the eastern third of the state. Much of this land is too broken or the soil too shallow or cherty to make its cultivation possible or advisable. The soils, however, are well adapted to the growing of the bluestem grasses. The normal annual precipitation in the region ranges from about 30 inches at the north end to approximately 36 inches on the southern end.

The vegetation was originally prairie grasses, big and little bluestems (*Andropogon furcatus* and *A. scoparius*) being the dominant species. The little bluestem was the principal species on ridge tops and the big bluestem was the dominant grass in the better land, the valleys, and on the slopes. Other grasses of secondary importance consisted of side oat grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*), switch grass (* Panicum virgatum*), Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), and prairie June grass (*Koeleria cristata*). Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratense*) was increasing very rapidly until 1934, but the abnormal dry hot conditions that prevailed during that and the two succeeding summers have eliminated it. Blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*) and buffalo grass (* Buchloe dactyloides*) have invaded many of the pastures, occupying the ridge tops and other areas having shallow soils. There has also been a great increase during the dry years of weedy annual grasses, mainly *Hordeum pusillum* and the annual species of Bromus. Other grasses of secondary importance include *Schedonardus paniculatus*, *Sporobolus cryptandrus*, *Chloris verticillata*, *Eragrostis pectinacea*, and *Sporobolus asper*.

A large percentage of the stock grazed in the bluestem region are shipped in from Texas, New Mexico, and western Kansas. The grazing season usually opens the latter part of April on commercially leased pastures and extends until about the middle of October. The season may be extended to the latter part of November during favorable years.

GRAZING CAPACITY

There has been a steady decline in the grazing capacity of the bluestem pastures. Prior to 1900 most of the pastures were stocked at the rate of 2 acres for a cow or mature steer. The average has been gradually decreased until in 1933, or before the present dry cycle started, the best pastures were carrying one mature animal to 4 acres, while the average for the bluestem region as a whole was 5 acres per head for the summer grazing period. During the past two years the average grazing capacity has been 7 acres for a cow or a 3-year-old steer.

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