THE importance of livestock production in the United States at present assumes the deepest significance of historic time. There is on hand the largest number of grazing animals of all time to be managed and fed. The extraordinary demand for livestock products at home and abroad necessitates the greatest efficiency in animal production and management of grazing resources.

A large segment of livestock products must come from native grazing lands. Maintaining those grazing lands already in vigorous condition and improving poorer ones is a vital task. It is highly essential for maximum production and for maintaining and efficiently using soil resources.

Fortunately the northern mixed prairie is generally in the best condition for heavy livestock production than it has been for many years. These ranges have made an almost miraculous recovery since the drought of the thirties. Much credit for this should be given to stockmen who have carried forward a diligent program of improvement, taking advantage of opportunities to increase water developments for livestock, to reseed many abandoned farm lands to grass, and to rest overused and drought-damaged grazing areas. Most of the grasslands have been greatly favored by improved climatic conditions which, combined with general livestock shortages until about 1939, have vastly helped improve the forage conditions throughout. However, much remains to be done on numerous areas where too close grazing has delayed recovery.

Livestock improvement has generally gone ahead of grassland improvement. However, if efficiency is to be obtained from well-bred range livestock, they must be provided with adequate nutritious forage. Grass is the basic material that livestock harvests and manufactures into needed animal products essential to war and peacetime purposes. Therefore, knowledge of native grazing plants and forage conditions is vital to the successful management of basic grazing resources. Individual native grazing plants whether grasses, shrubs, or nongrassy herbs have distinctive growth habits and feeding values as do small grains, corn, alfalfa, and timothy. Sound management of the native forage crop, which consists of many species, is rendered more difficult than that of a single farm crop, like corn or alfalfa. The better native grazing grounds are usually covered with mixtures of grasses, sedges, nongrassy herbs, and sometimes browse plants as

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1 Contribution from the Northern Great Plains Region, Soil Conservation Service, Lincoln, Nebr. Received for publication May 28, 1945.
2 Regional Chief of Operations.
3 For the purpose of this discussion, the northern mixed prairie is considered as being that area which lies between Canada on the north and Kansas and Colorado on the south, and between the Rocky Mountains on the west and the 98th meridian on the east. The discussion covers neither the grazing lands of the Nebraska Sandhills nor South Central Nebraska.