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 CURRENT SERIAL RECORD

Subject: Fall and Winter Cover Crops as Source of Supplementary Pasture

Field Distribution: War Board members, Extension Editors, BAE analysts,
 FDA Marketing Reports Chiefs, SCS, FSA, FCA Regional
 Information Chiefs

Suggested use: Background information; press and radio releases.

With the greatest number of livestock in the country's history on farms at the present time, it is imperative that every effort be made to obtain all possible supplementary pasture acreage during the coming fall and winter months. Because of the record number of livestock there is a serious feed problem created by the comparatively small feed reserve and a critical shortage of high protein concentrates. This feed situation places even greater emphasis on the importance of utilizing every available acre for temporary pasture, through the seeding of cover crops immediately following the harvest of a number of crops now growing on the land.

An information drive---with special attention on radio---should be launched immediately, and continued through August into early September. This push should be directed toward getting farmers to plant cover crops, especially cereal grains, on land that otherwise would remain bare and idle until spring.

There is a tremendous acreage which could be utilized for supplementary pastures. The July crop report shows an estimated harvest of 140 million acres of corn, soybeans, peanuts, potatoes, flax, grain sorghums and hemp. A large portion of this acreage could be drilled to pasture cover crops following the harvest. No doubt a great deal will be seeded to winter small grains by farmers planning to harvest these crops next season. About the only effort that the Department of Agriculture need expend on the plans of these farmers is to encourage early enough seeding to get adequate growth for fall grazing; while, of course, following various recommendations concerning time of seeding in order to prevent an infestation of Hessian fly or other insects and diseases.

There is, however, a considerable acreage of land that will not be utilized in this manner unless farmers make definite plans for seeding cover crops during the next few weeks. It is perhaps not generally realized that sufficient return can be obtained from grazing fall grains to pay for the seeding and also obtain a profit, even though the crops are not harvested for grain the following summer. In such cases, the grazing can be carried on right up to the time the land is to be prepared for planting in the spring. This adds to the usual couple of months' fall grazing and the pasturage obtained during the open weather of winter.

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(pasture cover crops page 2)

Emphasis should be stressed on the importance of seeding winter wheat, winter oats, rye and winter barley for pasture cover crops on land that will be used next year for the summer crop being raised on it at present. And in regions where adaptable and usually seeded for cover, there should be a drive directed toward increased plantings of Austrian peas, hairy vetch, crimson clover and rye grass to help meet the feed shortage that appears to be developing throughout the country.

Cover crops, in addition to aiding in the vital livestock feed program, are important for several soil conservation reasons; adding up to increased war crop production on a sustained basis year after year. Cover crops protect the soil against wind and water erosion during the bad weather months. The vegetation improves the soil's fertility by adding green manure material to it and by restoring nutrients to the soil which have been sapped by the preceding summer crops. The example of soybeans is an outstanding illustration of the importance of winter cover on the soil. It is imperative that land not be left bare and unprotected following the harvest of soybeans, for this crop leaves the soil in a fluffy, highly erosive condition. A cover crop will tie down the soil. It also will restore plant-growth elements to help insure high production next year.

Furthermore, by following the conservation practice of using the soil according to its fullest capability to produce, land seeded to cover crops actually performs a double duty in its all-out war production effort. It is in continuous, maximum and safe use around the calendar year---producing war crops during the summer and feeding livestock during the off-season months for added production of meats and dairy products.

The seeding of cover crops is good business for the farmer for it gets all-out production from the land. It also is patriotic use of his soil resource to help win the war, while safeguarding the land for continued production of food to protect the peace.

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