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4-H CLUB WORK HAS REINFORCED THE AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM ON
OUR FARM AND IN OUR COUNTY

A radio talk by Ralph B. McKenzie, 4-H club boy, DeKalb County, Illinois, delivered in the National 4-H club radio program, January 5, 1935, and broadcast by a network of 58 associate NBC radio stations.

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Happy New Year, fellow 4-H club members and friends. I am indeed very grateful to the United States Department of Agriculture for this opportunity to speak to the thousands of 4-H club members and friends listening in today.

The increased interest and membership of 4-H club members in the past few years in DeKalb Co. Illinois, has met with very pronounced results in bolstering the Agricultural program not only throughout the entire county but on my home farm as well.

I shall try in the few brief moments allotted me to point out to you some of the more important phases of 4-H club work which I believe have helped to encourage American agriculture.

Let us glance back briefly to the period of 1915-1920. We all realize, I am sure, that farming at that time was in the most part quite successful. Farmers were realizing large returns on their investments regardless of farm management. One idea was foremost in their minds; that of growing two blades where only one grew before.

Today, conditions have changed somewhat and an entirely different view of farm life is presented. With agricultural reduction in progress, we must practice farm management if we are to reduce production costs.

The agricultural program in the various counties as carried out by the extension workers, centers chiefly around five main points, namely:

1. Improvement in livestock, through breeding.
2. Management of livestock for greater profit, through
 1. Feeding
 2. Sanitation methods
 3. Improvement in crop varieties
 4. Improvement in soil fertility
 5. Better farm management by the use of farm accounts.

DeKalb Co. is no exception to the rule for it ranks with the best in agricultural production.

The 4-H club program in our county is very similar to the previous program.

First, we have the improvement of livestock through breeding. In our judging contests we learn the desirable points in the selection of foundation

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stock and although we carry out our projects with purebred stock we realize the impracticability of raising them merely for the prize in the showing.

Through our agricultural experiment stations we are learning to manage our livestock for greater profit by feeding simple balanced rations and practicing sanitation methods.

In improving the varieties of crops, 4-H club work has introduced many new strains with very desirable characteristics. 4-H club members learn through test plots which varieties are best adapted to the climate and soil of this locality.

All 4-H club members are required to keep complete records on their projects. Not only do they realize the cost of producing the various units but they learn the necessity of keeping accounts and determining the actual returns from their project.

Each of the previous points discussed is valuable to the 4-H club member in that he will retain them for use in future years. The lessons of breeding, feeding, crops, and records will enable him to improve practices on his home farm. The youth of to-day will be the leaders of tomorrow and with the especial benefits of leadership and cooperation as derived from the 4-H club meetings the farm youth will be found worthy.

For several years there has been a shortage of flocks of purebred sheep in our community and although we had never raised sheep before, I made plans to specialize in sheep club work.

I started out with a few head and gradually reached a full sized breeding flock.

In feeding the flock, I believe greater returns may be experienced by the utilization of home grown feeds rather than commercial feeds. With legume hay, oats and corn it is a simple matter to balance the ration. I found that in combating the various diseases and parasites among sheep, rotation of pasture land was the main factor to be considered.

In my corn projects, I spent considerable time developing an open pollinated strain of corn from two popular varieties. It has proven to be a very high producing variety, and is well adapted to this county. I have also had some experience in raising hybrid corn and I believe there is quite an opportunity for its advancement in the future.

I admit there were many lessons to learn in my various projects, some of them were costly, however, the values derived were all very worth while. I believe the utilization of farm lands through the raising of sheep, the net returns and the value of the flock established is a worthwhile enterprise.

In closing, I wish to take this opportunity to thank my parents, friends and leaders for the inspiration and help they have given me in attaining my objectives.