

Facilities Excellent, People Friendly and Cooperative

Humphrey Reports from Brazil

Robert R. Humphrey

Editor's Note: This is first in a series of articles from University of Arizona staff members now working at Fortaleza, Brazil. We hope to have similar reports in each issue. The reader should keep in mind the tremendous time lag between writing and publication of these articles. This one, for example, was written early in April, arrived just too late for our May 1 issue.

First impressions often have a freshness even though not the seasoned judgment of later ones. Also, while memories of the University of Arizona are still fresh and contrasts consequently sharp, such first impressions may be of particular interest to you back home.

In this initial report I shall emphasize assets, particularly those that facilitate an effective research program in the production of range and other forage crops. In any situation one is confronted with what one has and what one has not—assets and deficits. The distinctness of these two categories is more evident in a new situation than in an old one where enthusiasms may have been discouraged and first impressions dulled.

A Most Friendly Atmosphere

First, as to the faculty and others here with whom we are working. I know I speak for our entire group when I say that never have I met with such genuine, open-hearted, and open-handed friendliness. We have nothing like it in the States, even in our own Southwest.

On the other hand, there is a relaxed informality about the people here that is reminiscent of Arizona. The whole atmosphere is one that tends to make one feel at home and welcome. Because of the people and their attitude, problems that otherwise might appear insurmountable should become soluble. Difficult, perhaps, but capable of being worked out.

We had been told that each of us would have assigned to him a University of Ceará fellow faculty member as a co-worker in research. Not one, but three comrades have been assigned to me. So far as I can see, this plurality indicates a very real interest in the field I represent, and a hope that I may be able to contribute to improvement of the general forage picture here. Because of soil, climate, population pressures and the need for education, the forage production problems here appear unique. At very least, the problems are many and doing something about them will take the best we have to give.

Animal Men Plant Men, Too

Two of my co-workers are members of the Animal Science faculty but are interested and absorbed in forage

Dr. Humphrey is one of the first members of the U of A Agriculture team which has gone to Fortaleza, Brazil, for research, teaching and extension work at the University of Ceará. A veteran professor of range management, he is author of several publications and books dealing with the range ecology of the Southwest and particularly of Arizona counties.

plants to the point of knowing more about them than I would expect from many of our own botanists and range men.

Dr. Renato Braga—sort of unofficially one of my co-workers, although in the field of Animal Science and also vice-director of the University, has botany as an avocation. He has published a 548-page book, now in its second edition, on *Plants of the Northeast, Especially Ceará*. This is a technical taxonomic treatment, giving scientific and common names, descriptions and ranges of the plants of the whole of northeast Brazil.

An account of a physical facility will introduce one of my active co-workers, also an animal scientist. Last week, while we were being shown the various buildings, laboratories and other facilities, I caught a glimpse of some grass that looked as though it had been planted.

Walking over to investigate, I was almost immediately joined by a man who introduced himself as Alzir Barrêto. In the meantime it had become apparent that the grass I had seen was one among many in a well-kept plant nursery. Senhor Barrêto insisted that we start at one end of the nursery, which he then went over with me in enthusiastic detail. The plants were divided into three sections, grasses, legumes, and others. There were, in all, 58 species or varieties of grasses, 52 of legumes and 30 others. All were useful as forage.

All Carefully Identified

Each species had been planted in a brick-bordered square about 8 feet on a side. Each was labeled with a large printed sign, giving the scientific and common name and the locality in which it grew naturally. About half were exotics introduced from other continents or from other countries in South America.

My friend explained the forage value of every plant and told me not only whether it would grow in the state of Ceará but the soil and moisture or other climatic conditions to which it was particularly adapted. I complimented Senhor Barrêto on his nursery and his knowledge of the plants but he said ah no, it wasn't his. He was interested in what his animals ate and thought this was essential in an animal scientist. I agreed completely and told him that had always been my philosophy.

As a final item on the credit side of the ledger we are being given excellent offices equipped with anything we ask for in the way of new furniture. My own private office is in the new Animal Science building and is about 20 x 20 feet on a side.

Much That is Favorable

In summary what do we have as a start on the credit side of the forage-research ledger? We have an organization and a people receptive in the extreme to us and to what we may have to contribute to the solution of their problems. We have a friendly people, liking us personally and being liked in return. I find a faculty who are so aware of the relationship between forage-eating animals and the plants they eat that they become authorities in two fields rather than only one.

I find a plant nursery that would take years to build and that will serve as an indispensable foundation on which to build a forage research program. And finally, we are being provided with the very best in office facilities and equipment. These all add up to a favorable working environment.