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ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT

OF

NAVAJO COUNTY, ARIZONA

December 1, 1950 - March 17, 1951

by

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County Agricultural Agent

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The following itemization is an actual record of what took place during the period from December 1, 1950 to March 17, 1951:

Farm visits	83
Different Farms Visited	50
Office Calls	80
Telephone calls	38
Days in Office	43
Days in Field	20
News Articles Published	3
Individual Letters Written	94
Circular Letters Prepared	1
Circular Letters Mailed	121
Auto Miles Travelled	735

ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT
NAVAJO COUNTY
December 1, 1950-March 17, 1951

This is the final report for this Agent, with resignation effective March 17, 1951.

Navajo County is seeing a very severe drought, that is testing the nerves and durability of all concerned with agriculture. The winter has been a very open one, with a few light snows, but no moisture that will assure plenty of spring and summer water and grass.

Stockmen have faced a situation that has taken all of their managerial powers to get by. Around 80% of the cattle were shipped to other ranges during the past summer and fall. The cattle that have remained have received range supplements, varying from cottonseed cake and meal with mixtures of numerous other feeds.

Navajo County dairies have been hit with increased feed prices, and to date, no increase in the price of milk. Milk prices vary from 47 to 52 cents per fluid gallon. The adverse price condition will undoubtedly cause some heavy herd culling.

Poultrymen are facing somewhat the same situation as the dairy industry. The poor feed-egg price ratio seems to have very little effect on the number of chickens going into the brooder house. There seems to be a prevailing attitude that the situation is bound to get better.

Field crop prospects at this time are very poor. Reservoirs are less than a quarter full and ground moisture supplies are below normal. Heavy early spring and summer showers are about the only thing that can change the outlook.

POULTRY:

Eggs are the main source of income from all poultry in the County. The price has varied greatly in the past four months, going from 55 cents per dozen to an all-time high of one dollar. This high price held only a short time, and immediately following the new year, lowering egg prices and rising feed prices threatened to close out any profit that the poultrymen might have dreamed of.

The low margin of operation has caused some poultrymen to carry out drastic culling practices. One poultry raiser,

John Gardner of Woodruff, sold his entire flock to rid his premises of any diseased birds and to miss the periodic low prices that generally prevail until late summer.

The unfavorable profit in poultry industries was expected to cut down the number of chickens placed in the brooders. To date this Agent hasn't been able to detect any appreciable decrease, and it looks very much as if the poultry numbers in the County will remain fairly constant.

This Agent is in hope that the close culling, vaccination and sanitation will prevail amongst the flocks in the County. Without good management, many poultrymen will be forced to give up their operations.

DAIRY:

The dairy industry in the County is faced with a great many problems that may cause a vast change in our dairy industry here.

This Agent has advocated combining several of the dairies under one processing and delivery plant, in order to cut down overhead expenses.

Rising feed prices, plus outside competition, is making such a plan look decidedly more feasible as time goes on. Feed prices have greatly cut into the profit of the producers, and outside competition is getting greater each day.

Dairy herds in the County continue to improve with better cows and facilities. Most cows are still not top producers. Many will milk profitably for six months; then drop in milk production. This Agent has advocated cows that would give four fluid gallons daily for a nine or ten months period.

HORTICULTURE:

Horticulture activities have been greatest during the past four months. These activities vary from home landscaping and orchards to plans for varieties of truck crops.

The County is still going through a great home improvement program. These projects vary from town clean-ups to individual home improvements and yard landscaping. Lawns, perennial flowers and adaptable shrubs have been receiving the greatest amount of attention.

Pruning demonstrations were held again this year, with the aid of Mr. Harvey F. Tate, Extension Horticulturist. Bad weather cut down attendance, but those that were held were well received. A landscaping meeting was held in Holbrook under the sponsorship of the Holbrook Garden Club. This meeting was well attended, and the information given out did a lot to further the home beautification programs in this area.

Plans have been made to continue the cucumber fertilization program in the Snowflake area, through the cooperation of Ben Rencher, of Snowflake, Harvey F. Tate, Extension Horticulturist, and Dr. D. W. Pew, of the University of Arizona Vegetable Research Farm, at Tempe. This program was well accepted last year, and many of the farmers are looking forward to the information they can get from such a program.

Variety information for other truck crops is very much in demand. Sweet corn, tomatoes, string beans and melons appear to be the most adaptable of these crops. This Agent ran variety tests as reported in the 1949-50 Annual Report on tomatoes, corn and beans. This Agent hopes that these varieties showing the most promise will be given another trial this year.

FIELD CROPS:

Prospects for field crops are of a very doubtful nature at this time. Water storage is very low, and winter moisture supplies have been too low to see the crops through to maturity.

There are some plans in the Snowflake Irrigation District to drill two or three wells to try to make up the water shortage. If this is done, the majority of the acreage there will be put into crops.

Dry land wheat crops are in the ground, but show very little prospects for a crop. The fall was so dry that a large portion of the wheat did not come up then. The moisture received during the winter and early warm weather has started some growth now. This Agent feels that if there is any great amount of growth that it will be pastured.

The field crops that will receive the greatest amount of attention will be alfalfa, corn, and irrigated pastures,

With hay prices being exceedingly high, the majority of the farmers will make every attempt to grow all their needed forage.

IRRIGATION AND SOILS:

Irrigation is one of the biggest problems in the County as well as in the State. Water supplies have been exceedingly scarce for the past two years, and have brought out the need for more efficient use of water.

Inefficient use of water starts with the Irrigation Companies and the main irrigation canals. Many of the major canals are inefficient, causing heavy seepage losses, evaporation losses, and losses to tree and plant growth along canal banks. There is some effort to correct these situations through more efficient ditch cleaning, better grades and weed control.

Wiser use of water on the farm is definitely one of the biggest needs in the County. The present system of water distribution is on a turn system that delivers water every 9 to 18 days, without regard to the amount of water needed by the crop. This often leads to over-irrigation of some crops, and under-irrigation of others. The Snowflake Irrigation system is trying to work out a call system for water, which should make a great saving in the available water.

TREE CONTROL:

Cedar and juniper trees present one of the greatest scourges on the ranges of Navajo County. There have been many attempts to work out cheap and effective ways of controlling these trees. Mature stands have been cleared off with caterpillars and bulldozers and cables. This does a good job, but is slow and quite costly.

This Agent, in cooperation with the Forest Service and Ray Tankersley, of Heber, has done some work with circular saws and treating stumps with sodium ammate or arsenic. This system looks quite effective, but is still quite expensive.

This Agent believes that the best approach to the tree problem now is to try to control the smaller trees that will

be a problem in the next five to ten years. This can be done with an ax and the available hard labor. Chopping out the smaller trees will definitely be more economical than trying to handle the larger ones.

The Whiteriver Indian Service has been doing extensive control work on cedar and other types of trees that will definitely be worth while observing.

LIVESTOCK:

The range livestock industry in Navajo County has had one of the worst seasons of the industry. Drought forced many of the operators to move their cattle to a new location during the late summer of last year. Winter moisture supplies have been so low that there is little hope of any recovery of the depleted ranges in the near future.

The approximately 5,000 head of cattle that remained in the County have been carried through on old reserve grass, range supplements and a very open winter. Many of these cattle will face their most critical time from now until June. This period takes them through their calving time and the transition from dry feed to young tender grass growth that antagonizes a cow brute, but doesn't furnish any feed for her.

This Agent leaves the County very pleased with the wide adoption of the insect control program among the stockmen here. This work was initiated by the former Agent, Mr. D. E. Creighton, and was carried on when this Agent came to the County, with the aid of Dr. J. N. Roney, Extension Entomologist, Walter Armer, Livestock Specialist, and the many commercial companies that were interested. Insect control is practiced by at least 95% of the ranchers in the County.

Cattle prices have gone to an unbelievable high. Calves are now selling from 37 cents to 40 cents a pound, with everything in favor of the seller. Very few contracts are being made for spring or fall sales, due to the possibilities of price ceilings and roll backs. Most stockmen feel that their cattle will be in demand at any price, and that there is no point in tying their cattle up in a contract that would possible mean at a roll back cost.

4-H CLUBS:

This Agent leaves the County with one 4-H Club in operation. This is an Indian Club at Whiteriver, under the sponsorship of the Ft. Apache Indian Agency and the Extension Service.

This Club was organized by Richard Clark, Farm Management Supervisor, and is likely to be an outstanding Club, as long as the Indian children are allowed to do their work and retain pride of ownership.

If the Indian Service tries to gain too much recognition and puts the project on a school basis, the Club can be everything except a good 4-G Club.

FARM SAFETY:

This Agent devoted very little time to Farm Safety in the past four months. Mr. A. B. Ballantyne, Rural Sociologist, spent one day with this Agent and one day with Miss Lida Logan, Home Demonstration Agent, showing slides, and films on farm safety and fire hazards. The majority of the attendance was from 4-H Clubs and school age children.

ORGANIZATION:

This Agent has devoted a great deal of time to Extension Organization. This time was divided between a very outstanding Extension Conference at Tucson, and in writing planned programs for activities in the County.

This Agent, in going from the County, has left a list of what he considers the most promising programs for the County and those in which the Cooperators have shown the greatest amount of interest.

COUNTY OUTLOOK:

There are so many factors concerned in the immediate future of the County's agriculture that this Agent would not dare to make any predictions for the next eight months on the agricultural situation.

Drought conditions make agriculture a big "If it rains". Rising living costs and a few lagging agricultural commodities, such as milk and eggs, will have to make some sudden adjustments before many types of agricultural enterprises could be termed stable.

This Agent feels that the Agriculture in the County has been very progressive, and that it will continue to be. But there will be a period of stabilization and drought recovery that will prove most discouraging.

J. C. Armer
County Agricultural Agent
Navajo County
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