In the Field of Agriculture

WHERE STRAWBERRIES COME FROM

A recent survey of the production and marketing of strawberries in the United States, made by the United States department of agriculture, indicates that the eight most important commercial strawberry districts are central California, Tennessee, Maryland, Delaware, southern Louisiana, North and South Carolina, Virginia, and the Ozarks. In 1914, 1905 carloads of strawberries were shipped from central California. Lesser quantities were shipped from the other districts which are named in the order of their importance. From the Ozarks came 748 car loads last year.

The authors of the survey, which is published in Bulletin 137 of the United States department of agriculture, "Strawberry Supply and Distribution in 1914," point out, however, that the north plays a more important part in the strawberry industry than these figures might indicate. Great quantities of berries are grown in the north in small patches and shipped to market by trolley, express, or in the producer's own wagon. Only a very small portion of northern-grown berries are concentrated into carload lots, the basis for the government survey. In the south, however, on the Pacific coast, where berries are shipped long distances it is economical to arrange to have them sent by car loads.

The bulletin already mentioned contains a list of all shipping stations in the United States where car load shipments originate, together with the number of car loads sent out in 1914. From this list it appears that there was a grand total of 14,553.2 carloads of strawberries shipped commercially in 1914. Of these 2,312 came from California, the state state's closest competitor being Tennessee with a total of 1,571.5.

Another chart in the bulletin shows the duration of the shipping seasons in the various sections. Strawberries begin to leave central Florida as early as December and the movement continues until the end of March. By the first of March the first strawberries from southern Texas and southern California find their way to the market. About the middle of March the Louisiana crop begins to move, continuing about two months or until the middle of May May is, indeed the great month for car load shipments. By far the greatest part of the Tennessee and Virginia crop is shipped at that time, as well as much of the Delaware, southern Illinois, and Maryland supply. By the end of June southern California is almost the only area from which car load shipments are being made. The strawberries then on the market are chiefly grown in small quantities in areas close to the great consuming sections.

In connection with this work the department of agriculture is conducting a telegraphic market news service of the daily movement of strawberries to the various large markets during the current season together with the prices received. Reports of these movements and prices are telegraphed daily to producing areas and consuming centers in order to assist in the profitable distribution of the crop.

CO-OPERATIVE EGG CIRCLES

A co-operative plan to reduce the enormous waste now caused by the careless marketing of eggs is outlined in Farmers' Bulletin 656, "The Community Egg Circle," which has just been published by the United States department of agriculture. It is estimated that under the present haphazard methods of gathering and marketing eggs nearly 8 per cent of the country's total output is a total loss. Since the annual production of poultry and eggs in the United States is valued at more than $600,000,000—a sum equal to the value of the hay or wheat crop—the importance of reducing this loss is obvious.

The individual farmer too often regards his eggs as a mere by-product to which it is hardly worth his while to devote himself seriously; in consequence he is inclined both to neglect his poultry and to gather his eggs whenever he happens to have a spare moment or two. In consequence the output of his poultry yard is not only small to begin with, but a large proportion of it has begun to spoil before it reaches the hands of the country merchants. They usually buy the eggs on "case count," paying the same price for good, bad, and indifferent. The large markets, however, do not pay the same price, and reject many altogether; in consequence the price per egg to the farmer is made sufficiently low to provide a safe margin and to cover the loss on eggs of poor quality.

These conditions have been so firmly established by long usage that the individual can do little to alter them unaided. Community co-operation, however, can quickly raise the standard of the eggs shipped from any one neighborhood, and with the standard the price. The fancy trade is quite willing to pay more for a guaranteed article and the extra cost of producing the guaranteed article is more in pains than in cash.

The plan outlined in the bulletin already mentioned calls for the organization of a community egg circle which should include as soon as possible enough members to warrant the employment of a manager. Each member agrees to gather his eggs daily and in hot weather twice a day, to keep them in a cold place, and to deliver none that is more than 7 days old. No eggs are to be washed, and the male bird is to be kept from the flock except during the mating season.

The manager of the circle inspects, grades, and markets as a whole the deliveries the members make to him. Payment is made to the members in proportion to the number of eggs of each grade that they deliver and the prevailing market prices, less their proportion of the necessary expenses. The bulletin also gives suggestions for convenient receipt forms which will enable the members to check up their payments with their deliveries.

Such a system will enable the circle to make arrangements for the delivery of regular supplies to the best and most discriminating class of trade. There is always a demand for guaranteed eggs on the part of clubs, hotels, restaurants, and even well-to-do private families, but the individual farmer rarely has sufficient output to enable him to make a contract with any of these consumers, and the country merchant has no means to guarantee to the consumer the eggs that he buys from individuals over whom he has no control. Co-operative marketing also enables the eggs to be put up in attractive cartons, which can be turned into valuable mediums of advertising and reduces the expense of shipments. The increased returns, furthermore, will encourage the producer to devote more time and care to his stock, better hens will be kept, they will be kept in better condition, and in consequence there will be more eggs as well as better ones to market.

CUTTING AND CURING CLOVER FOR HAY

Clover for hay should be cut as soon as the first blossoms begin to turn brown. The mower should be started in the evening before the dew has fallen or in the forenoon as soon as the dew is off; and it is not wise to cut down too much at one time, says Extension Bulletin 47, by Andrew Boss and A. C. Arny of the College of Agriculture, University of Minnesota.

Clover hay should be cured in the shade, and not exposed to the hot sun unless it is frequently turned. The sun quickly dries the thin leaves, causing them to become brittle and easily lost. The leaves are the most valuable part of the hay. The drying of the leaves also closes the natural channel for the moisture to get out of the stems. After the clover has been cut, it should be turned with a tedder, side-delivery rake, or hay rake, as soon as the leaves in the upper part of the swath are thoroughly wilted. The object should be to keep the hay loose in the swath or windrow, that the wind may have free circulation through it, and to keep it from exposure to the hot sun, as far as possible. Before the leaves and stems become dry and stiff, the hay should be raked into windrows. If it looks like rain when the hay is being raked, it should be put into well-made cocks, and, if possible, covered with cloth covers. If the weather appears likely to continue good, the clover should be left in the windrow over night and turned once or twice the following forenoon. In good weather it should then be fit for the stack or the mow the second afternoon. If the weather is such that the hay is not fit to stack, but will still go into the cock, it should be put into good-sized cocks and left for some time.

CONDITIONS CHANGE CULTIVATION OF CORN

The amount and kind of cultivation for best results with corn depends upon the character and condition of the soil.

If the seed bed is firm below, mellow at the surface, and free from weeds, shallow early cultivation is all that is necessary, says A. C. Arny of the Minnesota Experiment station. This kills weeds and prevents the formation of a crust, thus keeping the moisture in the soil. Shallow, early cultivation may be given with a narrow shoveled cultivator or a light harrow, the teeth of which slant backwards. If there are small, loose sods or other material that may cover some of the hills, preventing the young corn plants from reaching the surface, the cultivator should be used instead of the harrow.

If the seed bed has not been thoroughly prepared, or if heavy rainfall has packed the well-prepared seed bed after the corn has been planted, early cultivation is needed to loosen up the seed bed giving the young plants a chance to grow, and to kill the weeds. Medium depth cultivation, either before the corn is up, following the planter marks, or as soon as the corn can be seen, followed by deep and close cultivation each way at the time the corn is from 4 to 6 inches high, is also good practice under such conditions.

Later cultivation for the purpose of retaining moisture and killing weeds should be shallow. If the soil has been properly worked before planting time, or deep cultivation has been given while the corn is small, later cultivation need not be more than 2 or 3 inches deep.

After corn is from 8 to 12 inches high, deep or close cultivation becomes increasingly harmful, cutting the roots near the surface and reducing the amount of water supplied to the plants.

Sufficient cultivation should be given to keep the surface of the soil mellow and free from weeds. Cultivation beyond this is unnecessary and only increases the cost of production.

CARE IS NEEDED IN CURING ALFALFA HAY

For all classes of animals except horses, alfalfa should be cut for hay when the new shoots or stems begin to appear at the crown. These are easily seen just as they come up among the old stems at about the beginning of blossoming time, says A. C. Arny, university farm, Minn. When alfalfa is to be fed to horses, it may be allowed to grow slightly longer than when it is to be fed to cattle, but it should never be left until the second crop is injured in cutting the first crop.

It is a good plan to cut the alfalfa in the evening, before the dew has fallen, or in the morning after the dew is off. If the crop is very heavy, a tedder can be used to advantage in the late forenoon or early afternoon after cutting. With good drying weather the hay can sometimes be raked and cocked the same day it is cut even though it appears somewhat green.

When the hay is partly cured in the swath, and cocked quite green, the moisture from the stems keeps the leaves damp, and both dry out together. Besides saving more of the leaves, hay of a better color and higher in nutritive value is secured by this method. Where alfalfa is cured on a very large scale, machinery is used almost entirely, and swath and windrow curing must be done, but care should be used to secure the leaves.

Alfalfa can be put in the stack or the mow at about the same stage of drying as clover, with similar results. If put into the stack or mow too green, musty hay will result.

CARE OF CHICKS

Young chicks will drink whenever they see water, whether it be in old stagnant pools or mud puddles, so one should always bear in mind to keep young chicks well supplied with cool, fresh water at all times. If you do not have grass runs supply them