

THE NEBRASKA SCENE

by James R. Lowell

While most persons do not realize it, the state of Nebraska is engaged in the farming business in a big way. Scattered over the state are 7,850 acres of land, equipped with the best of livestock, which constitute one of the most important phases in the management of Nebraska's 18 charitable, reformatory and penal institutions, run by the board of control.

Altho the state's collective farming enterprise saved at least \$250,000 in the cost of running the 18 institutions last year, and in all probability will be even more profitable in 1936, the purpose of the various institutional farms is as much to provide wholesome employment for inmates as to save on the board bill for wards of the state, according to Henry Behrens, control board member who has charge of the farming operations. Incidentally, Mr. Behrens has 800 acres of his own near Beemer, and he modestly admits it is the best farm in the best farming region of the state.

Livestock on the state farms includes 1,220 head of Holstein cattle, about 20,000 chickens and ducks and 229 horses and mules. Half a dozen tractors help augment the horse-power of the farms.

The cattle are foremost in the affection of Mr. Behrens and he hopes within 10 years to have one of the outstanding Holstein herds of the nation. Already a third of the 1,200 head are registered. There are 475 cows producing at the present time, and within another year and a half there will be at least another 100 registered cows producing.

The state herd saves the 18 institutions more than \$100,000 a year in milk bills, not to mention meat and by-products of milk. In the drouth year of 1934 these cows produced over two and one-half million quarts of milk or an average of over 10,000 pounds of milk per cow.

These cattle consumed \$37,000 worth of feed in the year. At 6 cents per quart, which was the average price paid for milk in 1934 by the institutions that had to buy milk, this milk was worth \$137,000. At this rate the dairy herds showed a net profit of \$100,000 in 1934. In addition, the dairy herds supplied over 50 tons of fresh beef for the institutions.

The Norfolk state hospital has the best herd, with 128 head, all registered, and 60 producers at the present time. The state hospital at Hastings, with its 1,511 inmates, has the largest herd—181 with 85 producers. Last November this

herd produced 62,000 pounds of milk.

Herds are maintained at 14 of the institutions, the size of the herd depending chiefly upon the amount of milk needed at the institution in question. For example, there are only 10 cows at the Grand Island soldiers' and sailors' home, as the old folks do not need as much milk as children.

On the other hand, such institutions as the home for dependent children at Lincoln require a great deal of milk. Altho this institution has a fine registered herd, the board of control finds it necessary to purchase several hundred dollars' worth of milk a month.

Institutions which do not have herds include the Kearney hospital for tuberculosis, Orthopedic hospital at Lincoln, school for the blind at Nebraska City and the Omaha school for the deaf. The first named gets considerable milk from the state industrial school herd nearby. The Omaha institution, altho it has only 200 inmates, spend about \$200 a week for milk.

Mr. Behrens' goal is to produce a quart of milk per capita per day for all the inmates of the 18 institutions. This will require about two and one-half times as much milk as is being produced now, but he figures it will be worth the time and effort because of the saving that will be effected in the institutional food bill, and the health of state wards.

Every effort is being made to build up the quality of the state herds. The herd sire at Kearney is a son of the world's life time champion cow, Varsity Vertex Quantity at the state university. The board of control has shown a herd at the state fair for the past four years and has taken at least 75 premiums as well as showing the grand champion cow three different times.

The sire of the herd at the York reformatory for women took first place at the state fair in 1934, while the Lincoln men's reformatory herd sire was grand champion last year. The sire of the Norfolk herd is the son of the twice all-American bull of the Elmwood farms near Chicago. The sire of the Hastings herd is a son of a three-times all-American bull at the Maytag farm in Iowa.

As the herds increase in size, more of the milk will be used for butter. Already considerable butter is being made, with 4,000 pounds churned in eight and a half months by the girls at the Geneva training school.

The largest poultry flock is at Geneva where about 4,000 fowls are being maintained. The other big flocks are at the Hastings and Kearney institutions and the Lincoln home for dependent children.

Incidentally it takes 300 ducks for one duck feed at the Hastings hospital.

"good riddance," the farmers as a whole are disappointed and demand that some measure be developed to protect the state's greatest industry.

Even the worst enemies of the new deal and its alphabetical agencies are admitting that the AAA was a Godsend to Nebraska in the drouth of 1934. Here are a few of the comments made by outstanding Nebraskans:

Governor Cochran: "I hesitate to think what would have happened to the farmers and small business men of Nebraska, during the past two years of drouth, had it not

been for the agricultural policies of the Roosevelt administration... not even the critics of the administration wish to return to the desperate condition of agriculture during the 10 years preceding the Roosevelt administration." The governor advocated a constitutional change unless congress finds another way to accomplish the purpose of the late Triple A.

S. R. McKelvie, former republican governor of Nebraska: "The AAA had its good uses as an emergency measure, but it was intrinsically wrong as a permanent program. What we need now is government grants to farmers to in-

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