

PLAN OF WORK  
AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE

ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY  
VIRGINIA

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1955

December 1, 1954 - November 30, 1955

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## B. CONTENTS OF PLAN

1. Rockbridge County is in the western part of Virginia, lies mainly in the Great Valley of Virginia, and has a total land area of 616 square miles. The county includes the west slope of the Blue Ridge, the entire width of the Great Valley, and extends westward beyond the western boundary of the Great Valley far enough to include two ridges and their intervening narrow lowland belts, together with the east slope of a third ridge, in the northwest part of the county, and one ridge and the east slope of a second in the southwestern part.

Because of the prevailing surface relief, drainage throughout the county is good, and on the steep slopes is excessive. There are only a few small poorly drained places on some of the bottoms and terraces.

The principal types of livestock and crops produced are as follows: Beef Cattle, Dairy Cattle, Sheep, hogs, corn, wheat, oats, barley and hay. A large part of the open land is in permanent pasture for grazing of beef, dairy and sheep animals. Production of chickens and turkeys is widespread throughout the county ranging from small farm flocks to very large plants.

Rockbridge County has a total of seventeen hundred and fifty-one farms with an average size of one hundred thirty-seven acres per farm. This acreage in farms accounts for sixty-two percent of the total land area of the county. A large acreage is contained in two National Forests running the length of the county along two sides. The percentage of tenancy has declined from fifteen percent in 1945 to ten percent in 1950.

2. It is recognized that we face a period of transition in our farming business. During the past several years we have greatly expanded production of most food products which was absorbed at good prices for farmers when coupled with the storage program. Our farmers are now turning out meat and feed grains in record quantities, and to such an extent, that it is necessary for them to adjust production more in line with future demand.

Also to be taken into account is how to overcome, as quickly as possible, the effects of the 1954 drought. Since prices of most farm products are expected to decline slightly as compared to 1954 and farm costs to remain about the same it appears that 1955 will be less favorable for farmers than 1953 and 1954. In view of this cost-price squeeze in agriculture it becomes increasingly important that farmers of the county fully utilize their resources and strive for efficient low-cost production.

It is believed that most farmers of the county will be able to finance their operations during 1955 out of savings and by borrowing from local sources. Our farmers generally, during the past few years, have added to saving accounts, improved their buildings and farm land to the point they are in a fair position to meet the conditions caused by lower prices for their products.

3. The 1955 Extension Plan of Work was developed under direction of the Board of Agriculture and in cooperation with livestock and agronomy commodity committees along with special interest committees for dairying and 4-H Club Work. Meetings were held to discuss the 1955 outlook, to review the past and present situation, list the problems and needs of the county and make plans as to their solution.

4. Major needs of the county were determined as follows: (a) Improved Livestock (b) Better Marketing of livestock (c) Agronomy (d) 4-H Club Program and (e) Farm and Home Development Program (Farm Unit Approach).

#### 5. Improved Livestock

A. As elsewhere in Virginia, Rockbridge County farmers have been increasing in livestock numbers during the past several years. With this increase in number has come only a fair amount of improvement in the quality of our livestock. The Livestock Committee members and the agents feel that major emphasis must be devoted to this matter during 1955 and succeeding years.

B. Most immediate need is determined as the use of greater numbers of registered purebred bulls, boars and rams on herds and flocks throughout the county.

C. Efforts will be devoted toward acquainting livestock raisers with extra profit to be gotten from use of better sires. This is to be accomplished by demonstrations of better calves at feeder calf and lamb sales and by farm livestock tours during summer and fall. Producers of purebred livestock in the county will be urged to make available quality sires at reasonable prices. All livestock raisers will be informed of various special sales held by several breed associations and purebred breeders in nearby counties and encourage them to attend such sales.

D. Program will be taken to people by means of radio, circular letters, newspaper articles, personal visits and demonstrations at sales and on farms. The goal of the livestock committee and agents for 1955 is that of acquainting all livestock producers with the need for better livestock and the benefits to be derived therefrom and especially to increase the number of registered purebred sires by at least ten percent. A Countywide Livestock School will be conducted during the year.

#### Better Marketing of Livestock

A. At the present time the local auction markets are the chief outlets for the sale of livestock. It is felt that greater numbers of our livestock could be marketed to better advantage through their own cooperative organization, Shen-Valley Meat Packers, Inc., which is located in a nearby county.

B. In regards to the local county livestock market, it appears there is need for a better grading system, also, that special sale day should be emphasized for the sale of lambs. Greater numbers of farmers need to sell their improved livestock through such outlets as graded feeder calf sales and

cooperative marketing plants.

C. Efforts are to be made toward establishment of special days for sale of lambs at which time they will be graded by official State Graders. A yearling sale is planned for this fall in addition to the two graded feeder calf sales held annually. Adult classes for fed steers have been added to the Roanoke Area 4-H Show and Sale and will demonstrate for our farmers the methods and costs of full feeding operations.

Agronomy

Greater quantities of feed grains, hay and pasture will be needed by our farmers in 1955 to meet the needs of increased livestock numbers and shortages brought about by the drought of the past year. Emphasis will be placed on grain production, increased use of fertilizers for grain, hay and pasture production.

1. Corn - The Agronomy Committee estimates that a little greater acreage of corn will be planted in 1955 than in the past year. It is also felt that more farmers will use adapted hybrids (about 80 percent at present) and use increased amounts of fertilizer on their corn crops. The committee recommends the following methods for corn production in 1955.

- (a) Use of adapted varieties by a larger number of farmers.
- (b) Proper amounts of fertilizer to use in obtaining maximum yields. (Application of nitrogen on heavier soils as side dressing or in fertilizer at planting time.)
- (c) To encourage farmers to plant corn at proper time, at correct depth, and on land where erosion is not a serious problem.
- (d) To use best possible cultural methods (make wide distribution of Circular 541 in promoting corn production.)
- (e) Make wide use of circular letters, meetings, newspaper and radio publicity in promoting corn production program for the county.

2. Alfalfa - In keeping with the state as a whole, the alfalfa acreage of the county is steadily increasing. While this is true there is a great need for more alfalfa for use as hay, silage and pasture. The Agronomy Committee members and agents report encouraging progress as to the number of new stands being established throughout the county and recommend the following methods for increasing production this year:

- (a) Make certain that established seed dealers have on hand a sufficient supply of alfalfa seed of the varieties recommended by the Experiment Station at V.P.I. (especially the certified Williamsburg alfalfa seed.)
- (b) To establish in several sections of the county demonstration seeding of Williamsburg alfalfa.
- (c) To bring to the attention of farmers generally the need for more alfalfa and best means of producing this legume through use of circular letters, (alfalfa circular) meetings, newspaper and radio publicity.
- (d) By means of personal visits by agents and committeemen.

3. Small Grains - Crops for grain prospects are not very favorable as most small grains were put in last fall rather late and following drought conditions. Winter topdressing will be especially important and is to be emphasized.

- (a) To conduct a midwinter and spring publicity and educational campaign on seeding oats (winter and spring varieties). Stress will be placed on the importance of proper varieties, time of seeding and adequate fertilization.
- (b) Have demonstrations to show need for topdressing small grain crops with nitrogen.
- (c) To bring generally to the attention of farmers the benefits to be obtained from applying nitrogen on fall seeded small grain crops. Emphasis will be placed on increasing yields and possible utilization for grazing by livestock.
- (d) Recommended varieties of all small grain crops to be made available to farmers generally by farm visits, meetings, other agricultural agencies, seed, fertilizer and machinery dealers, and circular letters.

4. Pasture - Better pasture planning and management are "Must" on the livestock farm. This becomes increasingly true when livestock numbers are on the increase and prices received are at lower levels. It is at a time like this that it really becomes important that meat and milk be produced at the lowest possible cost to the farmer. Winter pastures are generally the most neglected link in the year around feeding program. They offer the greatest possibility in cutting feed costs in the year ahead. Mixtures of small grains, ryegrass and clovers seeded between August 1 and September 15, and properly fertilized, will give astounding production of milk and meat for our farmers. It will mean a cut in high labor costs and expensive farm feeding can be held to a minimum. Methods to be followed in carrying out a county-wide pasture program are as follows:

- (a) Pasture seeding program during spring and late summer.
- (b) Demonstration seedings of tall grass - ladino pastures. (adult and 4-H). Hold field meetings in connection with demonstrations.
- (c) Countywide top-dressing program for established pastures.
- (d) To publish a pasture edition of the county paper.
- (e) Establish demonstrations of winter pastures on sheep and dairy farms.
- (f) Work with all agricultural agencies, dealers and organizations to sponsor special programs on pasture, and to generally promote pasture improvement program for the county by use of news articles, circular letters (leaflets), newspapers and radio. Special emphasis will be given toward getting farmers to use adequate quantities of fertilizer on pastures and crops.

#### 4-H Club Program

As in most counties of the State, the numbers of boys taking part in 4-H Club work in Rockbridge County has increased in recent years. Along with this increase in enrollment, arises the problem of obtaining an adequate number of leaders to help the Agents with project instruction and in conducting the many phases of training which must go into a well rounded and successful county-wide program of Club Work. Emphasis will be placed on obtaining additional adult and junior leaders and giving them proper training for the work.

Following objectives will be worked toward in promoting the 4-H Club this year:

- (a) Obtain additional adult and junior leaders.
- (b) Larger enrollment and greater percentage completions of projects.
- (c) Increased service from newly organized 4-H Honor Club.
- (d) Increased number of club members with special sheep projects, baby beef, poultry and rabbit projects.
- (e) To have larger number of members taking part in sheep shearing school.
- (f) To offer Tractor Maintenance Course and conduct a county 4-H Tractor Operator's Contest to promote skills and show safety methods necessary in proper operation, care and handling of tractors and machinery.
- (g) Greater publicity regarding club work. (Such as floats in parades, achievement day activities, window displays during National 4-H Club Week, newspaper articles with pictures, radio, and poultry and livestock judging teams.
- (h) Have several of the older 4-H Club boys carrying livestock projects obtain purebred heifers for establishment of herds under the sponsorship of the various breed associations.
- (i) To supply each club member with a copy of printed 4-H Yearbook (obtain one or more of the local bank's as sponsor, if possible).
- (j) To have twenty-five boys in attendance at 4-H club camp.

Dairy Cattle - Even though a great deal of progress has been made in the past few years toward improving our dairy cows there remains a great deal to be accomplished. Great numbers of the cows in use both in established dairy herds and for family use have very poor production records.

The following efforts will be used in promoting the dairy industry of the county:

- (a) To acquaint all farmers owning dairy cows with the program and operations of the Rockbridge Artificial Breeding Association. This to be accomplished by means of personal contacts, community meetings, milk and cream routes, and by means of radio and newspaper publicity.
- (b) To have increased number of 4-H boys conducting a dairy project.
- (c) Promote program whereby dairymen having a surplus of good heifers as result of artificial breeding program will make them available to 4-H Club boys at reasonable prices.
- (d) To have increased number of herds on test with Alleghany-Rockbridge D. H. I. A. and strive to have all such herds enrolled in artificial breeding program.
- (e) Have active Bangs Disease Control program.
- (f) All dairymen to be furnished with latest information on better management practices such as feeding, parasite and disease control, through community meetings, circular letters, personal visits, newspaper articles and radio programs.

Sheep - Properly managed, good commercial flocks of sheep continue to be one of the best investments for our farmers. Efforts will be directed along the following lines in promoting the sheep numbers in the county and quality of the flocks:

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- (a) Have 4-H sheep club members establish flocks of breeding ewes. To manage and care for these according to best known management practices on feeding, diseases, and parasite control.
- (b) Furnish all farmers information on feeding, management and disease and insect control through meetings, circular letters, radio and newspaper articles.
- (c) Encourage increase in sheep numbers.
- (d) Assist farmers in locating flock replacements.
- (e) Assist sheep growers in cooperatively marketing their wool.
- (f) Have large group of 4-H Club members and farmers attend sheep shearing school.
- (g) Promote "Returns-Per-Ewe Contest" in county.

Poultry - In recent years more of our farmers are engaging in production of broilers and turkeys. Laying flocks are on the increase as well as family flocks. Efforts to promote this important enterprise will be along the following lines:

- (a) To conduct, as in past years, special 4-H Poultry demonstrations.
- (b) Have increased number of 4-H Club members with poultry projects who will follow approved methods of producing broilers, pullets and management of their laying flocks.
- (c) To enroll farmers in "Farm Flock Improvement Project" in 1955.
- (d) Give information on poultry production generally throughout the county by means of personal visits, meetings, circular letters (adult and 4-H), radio and newspaper articles.

#### 6. Farm and Home Development Program (Farm Unit Approach)

There is a growing appreciation that the complexities facing modern-day farm families are such that they have to make a much more careful analysis of their problems and opportunities, and develop a more carefully outlined course of action in relation thereto, if their efforts are to be repaid with adequate economic returns and family satisfactions.

In turn extension has an obligation so to adjust and apply its educational services that it may utilize its resources most efficiently in rendering counsel and guidance to individual farm families in their efforts to cope successfully with all of their complex farm and home problems.

In Rockbridge County (a non-pilot county) The Farm and Home Development activity will be conducted this year, by the Home Demonstration Agent, County Agent and Assistant County Agent, on not more than four farms. The County Board of Agriculture and Home Demonstration Advisory Board will assist and advise the Agents in the selection of the families. While the owner-operator situation generally prevails, no doubt at least one landlord-tenant situation will be included.

#### 7. Calendar of Work for Year

December - Planning Extension Program and projects; 4-H Club Meetings and project visits; Outlook Meetings; Farm Visits; 4-H Club Christmas Parties; Radio Programs; Lexington Christmas Parade (4-H Club's float); Civic

- Club Meeting; Television Program; Lexington-Rockbridge County Christmas Basket Program; Fertilizer School.
- January - 4-H Club Meetings and project visits; Tractor Maintenance Meeting; Outlook Meetings; Fertilizer Demonstrations; Baby Beef Show and Sale Meeting; Dairy Breeding Program; Farm Visits; Soil Conservation Meeting; Meetings of Commodity Committees; Radio Programs; Sheep Breeders Association Meeting; Returns-Per-Ewe Contest; County-wide Livestock School; Rural Life Institute Planning Meeting; Farm Unit School; 4-H Honor Club Meeting; Staunton N.F.L.A.-F.C.A. Annual Meeting; Dairy Short Course.
- February - Feeder Calf Sales Committee Meeting (State); Annual Meeting Shen-Valley (County); 4-H Club Meetings and visits; Livestock Sales and Meetings; Tractor Maintenance Course; Farm visits; State D.H.I.A. Meeting; 4-H Club Planning Meeting, Honor Club Meeting; Radio Programs; News Articles; Nutrition School; Feeder Calf Sales Committee (County); Annual Meeting Virginia Artificial Breeders Association.
- March - Area Wool Growers Meeting; Farm Credit Conference; 4-H Club Meetings Project Visits; Tractor Maintenance Course; D.H.I.A. Annual Meeting (County); Fertilizer Demonstrations; Livestock Sales; Farm Visits; Radio Programs; Annual Meeting Shen-Valley Meat Packers, Inc.; Livestock Short Course; News Articles.
- April - Feeder Calf Sale Planning (Spring Sale); 4-H Club Meetings and project visits; 4-H Baby Beef Show and Sale planning; 4-H Sheep Shearing School; 4-H Tractor Maintenance Contest; Radio Programs and news articles; Farm visits.
- May - 4-H Camp Bethel Planning Meeting; Annual Meeting United Wool Growers Association; 4-H Club Meetings and project visits; Pasture Tour; Tour professional workers, Staunton Experiment Station; Sheep Shearing training; 4-H County Council Meeting; Farm visits; Radio programs; Training Meeting 4-H Camp; Rural Life Institute; 4-H and Adult Show and Sale (Hollins); News Articles.
- June - County Wool Pool; Lamb sale (4-H); Camp Bethel 4-H Camp; 4-H project visits; 4-H All Star Conference and State Short Course; Radio Programs and news articles; Farm Visits.
- July - Sheep Dipping Program; Farm Tour; Annual Meeting Rockbridge Artificial Breeding Association; Annual County-wide 4-H Club picnic; 4-H Conservation Camp; Farm Visits (adult and 4-H); Radio programs; Institute of Rural Affairs; News Articles.
- August - 4-H Club Project Visits; Feeder Calf Sale Planning and Visits; Farm visits; Water Systems Meeting; Radio Programs and news Articles; Annual Extension Conference at V.P.I.; Staunton Experiment Station Field Day.
- September - Feeder Calf Sale visits and inspection; 4-H Electric Congress; Community Fair; 4-H Yearbook; 4-H Club Meetings; Farm visits; Feeder Calf Sale; Radio Programs; news articles; Lynchburg and Staunton Fairs.
- October - Feeder Calf Sale planning and visits; 4-H County Council Meeting; Radio Programs; News articles; Farm visits; 4-H Club Meetings; Feeder Calf Sale; Fall Yearling Sale.
- November - Planning Extension Program; District Extension Conference; 4-H Club Meetings; Farm visits; Radio programs; News Articles; Annual Report.