

PLAN OF WORK

1960

HIGHLAND COUNTY

E. B. JONES, JR.

COUNTY AGENT

Highland County Agriculture

Highland County is situated in the west central part of the Great Valley of Virginia and borders West Virginia. In 1950 there were 150,908 acres in farms, 56.7 per cent of the total area of 266,240 acres. There were 609 farms averaging 247.8 acres in size and \$8672 in value of land and buildings, according to the 1950 Census of Agriculture.

Highland is one of Virginia's most beautiful counties and contains fertile valleys and rugged mountains. Altitudes range upward from 2000 to 4600 feet above sea level. Temperatures at Monterey, the county seat, at 3000 feet elevation, average about 30 degrees in January and 67 in July. The frost-free growing season is about 146 days. Annual precipitation averages over 42 inches.

Agriculture is the principal industry. Highland is among the leading livestock counties in the state and ranks third in the number of sheep. Livestock supplied 79 per cent of the value of farm products sold in 1949, poultry 10 per cent, forest products 5 per cent, dairy products and crops 3 per cent each. Highland is one of the few Virginia counties which produces maple syrup and sugar.

Forests cover over one-half of the county. In 1950 farms contained 67,000 acres of woodland, the George Washington National Forest 53,461 acres and the remainder is in commercial forests. Lumber, pulpwood, and fence posts contribute to the farm income.

County Organization to Plan the Extension Program

The overall advisory group to formulate an Extension Program is the County Board of Agriculture. This group is made up of two leaders from each of the ten county communities, two members representing the County Federation of Woman's Clubs, two members representing the County 4-H Club Council, one member

from each of four civic organizations, one banker and one member from each of the special interest groups. The County Board of Agriculture will be called into session when needed. Most of the planning for the Extension Program this year has been done by special interest groups.

General Problems and Need of the County

As mentioned before, one of the main problems confronting the people of this county is the one of keeping our population at home. During the past year all organizations have worked toward a solution. In 1950 a Chamber of Commerce was organized in hopes that through this organization's efforts some small industry would be encouraged to locate here. An industry that would give work to only one hundred people would be a boost. In agriculture there is a trend toward more poultry production and more dairying than ever before. The two mentioned farm enterprises will give more people work and more farm income and will encourage some to stay on the farm rather than seek work elsewhere.

A. Agronomy Committee Planning

The agronomy committee met to study the county data and trends in regard to things pertaining to agronomy this year.

By using census figures from 1939, 1944, 1949, 1953, and 1954, we find that corn acres had dropped continuously during the period. In 1939 there were 1966 acres in corn compared to 950 acres in 1954. Yield per acre has increased from 36.8 to 45.8 during that period. All small grains - wheat, oats, barley, rye, buckwheat acreages decreased along the corn. And especially wheat acreage - 1314 acres in 1939 compared to 340 acres in 1954.

All hay crops have increased in acreage. Alfalfa acreage in 1939 was 19 acres as compared to 617 in 1954. With clover and timothy there was a little increase. Old meadow hayland acres increased some. In livestock, dairy cattle, sheep and hog production remained near the same in Highland during the period

1939 - 1954. We have around 2300 head of dairy cattle, 22,200 head of sheep, and 2400 head of hogs. Poultry numbers have increased enormously during the past few years. Beef cattle census figures are surprising. In 1939 there were 635 head of beef animals in Highland. In 1954 there were 9700 or a 34.6% increase in number during the fifteen year period. The 34.6% increase in beef cattle number is being cared for on practically the same acreage of pasture and hayland. This proves that the use of lime, fertilizer and seeding practices carried on by our land owners has certainly helped for more and better pasture and hay. In figuring the number of beef animals on hand and the acres of pasture and hayland, it figures that there is one beef animal for each five acres. Yet on that five acres, there are two and one-half head of ewes and their lambs plus some dairy animals, hogs and poultry.

Highland County is the third largest sheep producing county in the State with 22,200 head. We generally recommend to people to keep one ewe for each head of beef stock. Here it figures two and one-half head of ewes for each beef animal.

After studying data and trends, the committee decided to follow this line of work for the coming year.

1. To continue with lime, fertilizer and seeding demonstrations.
2. To continue testing early maturing varieties of corn hybrids for their adaptability so that recommendations can be made to those who wish to grow corn. The new Virginia Hybrid #126 was tested last year and showed possibilities of being well adapted variety for this county. Provided the seed can be obtained, this variety will be tested or demonstrated again this year.
3. The committee will sponsor a program to encourage land owners to grow more alfalfa. The program will be called "one acre of alfalfa on each farm for each buck flock." A buck flock is 20 to 25 head of ewes. A little alfalfa grown on each farm will help winter the sheep flock in better condition and will also help the dairy cows that get some good hay do a better job of winter milk production.

72

With newer varieties of alfalfa and better seeding practices, the growing of this legume is much more successful than it used to be.

Alfalfa Weevil Control Demonstrations

Highland county alfalfa growers were probably the last in the state to be troubled with alfalfa weevil damage. This was probably due to the higher altitude. Damage during 1959 was estimated at from 10% to 70% in the different fields inspected. During 1959 approximately 50% of the fields were treated. Plans were made to hold two demonstrations during 1960 on the control of alfalfa weevil. Demonstrations were planned with the help of Mr. John Shoulders and Mr. Jack Rowell of the Extension Service. Fertilizer with heptachlor added would be applied on two plots of alfalfa first year stands on the farms of Elizabeth Francis Swecker and Roy Harper, Monterey community.

The work of the County Agent would be to select the places, get the cooperation of the land owners, obtain the fertilizer, decide on a time for application and write news articles during the year on what was being done and the results.

B. Beef Cattle Production Work

People interested in beef cattle production met on the 21 st day of January this year to elect a new committee for beef cattle work and decide on a program to be carried on.

Work to be done:

1. A calffood dehorning demonstration will be held in each of the three districts.
2. A yearling steer sale will be held around the 19th of September depending on the date that the State Committee gives us.
3. Two calf sales are again planned for. One sale will be held the first week of October. This will be an all hereford sale. A second sale will be held around the 24th of October depending on dates agreed upon with the State Committee.

72

Members of the committee will group into three groups to inspect and vaccinate the calves at least thirty days before sale date. All beef cattle sales will be held in cooperation with Bath County consignors. The county agent will tend to all necessary advertising for the sales.

The agreement the committee has with the market management is that they will handle the sale and pay all bills of work of the sales. Half of the profits of each sale, less the insurance, will be turned back to the local calf sale committee.

In one of our committee meetings, it was decided that our organization would go along with Plan No. II of the Virginia Veterinary Health Program. In that we would accept calves, both steers and heifers, from those herds bangs free and TB free. We would take steers only from herds not Blood tested. This program was announced to all consignors by letter. Many more herds in the county will have been tested for bangs and TB this year due to our compulsory testing that went on during the fall of 1958 and the winter of 1959.

Several more calf producers have requested that they be allowed to consign calves to the two sales this year. More pens will need to be built at our local market in order to take care of the larger number of cattle in the special sales. The directors of our local market agreed to do some extra building during their annual meeting held in January this year. It is planned that we have additional pens to handle 700 more calves in the 1960 sales. My job as county agent is to arrange for inspection of calves to be done, to obtain hip tags, to take care of local advertising of the sales, to work up penning plans and to see that we have adequate sales crews to get the work done.

C. Sheep Production Planning

The committee for sheep production is composed of H. C. Lunsford, Chm.; Julian Folke, B. L. Armstrong, W. B. Folke, Jay Haamer and Carl Armstrong.

Heretofore the main projects planned by this committee was to hold a cooperative wool pool, to sponsor the 4-H sheep program which included a lamb show and sale and to sponsor an annual commercial ram sale.

1. Wool Pool Planning

In 1959, 100,094 odd pounds of wool was consigned and handled by the Highland County Wool Pool. The wool pool during all previous years was in turn handled and sold by the United Wool Growers' Inc., Harrisonburg, Virginia. During 1958 the wool pool committee could not see a way that this county pool could be delivered to the United because of the spread in price between that paid by United and the price that "topmakers" were offering on the farms here. After conferring with Mr. East, General Manager of the United, our committee decided to sell the pool to the highest bidder by sealed bid. The wool was sold to Caldwell & Co., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

- a. This year our committee will have the same situation facing it. Will we have to sell to the highest bidder or work some agreement with the United?
- b. Meetings have been held to try and acquaint farmers with the situation.
- c. Producers will be encouraged to stay with the cooperative.
- d. The county agent's job will be to make contacts for committeemen and buyers.
- e. Will arrange for letters to wool producers and do write-ups for the county newspaper.
- f. Take-up days will be arranged for.
- g. Transportation will be arranged for.
- h. Wool bags will be obtained and delivered to the producers.

2. 4-H Club Lamb Show & Sale

1. 4-H club boys and girls with sheep projects will be encouraged to show their lambs, both purebred and commercial, in the county lamb show held at the Highland County Fair to be held the first week of September 1960.

2. Classes will be arranged for the different breeds. Prize money will be arranged for from the Fair Association.
3. A judge will be arranged for.
4. A time and place for the sale of the lambs on Thursday will be taken care of.

3. Annual Commercial Ram Sale

1. Experience for the past two or three years in holding our commercial ram sale on a regular market day at the Highland County Livestock Market proved to us that this set-up is no good for our sale of top quality registered yearling rams.

A special sale of rams on regular market days gives sheepmen an opportunity to bring all of their trading rams - old, crippled and non-purebred to the sale. This sale hurts the sale of good purebred rams.

2. This year changes are being planned for.
3. Our commercial ram sale will be held on a special day not definitely decided but between the 15th of August and the 1st of September.
4. The ram sale will be held in conjunction with our second commercial yearling ewe sale.
5. Agreements have already been made four farmers that we can be sure of having at least 350 yearling ewes. It is hoped that others can be obtained by sale time.
6. Duties of the county agent will be to help locate more ewes for the sale.
7. Help decide on a time for the sale with Sheep Specialist, Geo. Allen.
8. Arrange for use of the Highland County Market.
9. Advertise for the sale.

D. Highland County Fair Organization

1. The county fair organization is the one that brings together all working groups in the county. The organization certainly ties together the county Extension program.
2. During the past seven years of the Fair's existence, it has been an uphill pull. People had to first learn how to operate or manage such an adventure. The representatives of the three Ruritan Clubs, the Monterey Lions Club, the County Woman's Club, the A-M Council, the Home Agent, and the County Agent were in attendance for the first organizational meeting called for planning the 1960 Fair.

3. New fair association officers have been elected with Geo. Hooks, Jr. President and Geo. H. Payne, General Manager.

Fair dates have been set for September 1, 2 and 3, 1960.

As county agent my job with fair work will be:

Help revise premium list for livestock and crop exhibits; adult and junior groups.

Work with the committee to obtain judges for livestock and crops exhibit.

Send a premium list to all adult and 4-H groups.

Help select animals for exhibit and help boys and girls ready their exhibits for the fair.

Distribute fair prizes.

E. 4-H Club Work

The goal in 4-H club work is to increase the enrollment of the age group in the county from 25.6% to 30%.

Club members will be entered in the District Contests held in May. It is hoped that at least six members can attend 4-H Short Course in June. In July around 20 club members and leaders will attend 4-H camp at Holiday Lake. The last of August club members will be helped with their fair exhibits at the county fair. Boys and girls with top lambs and calves will be encouraged to take their top animals to the State Fair in Richmond. Achievement Day will be held in December.