

**ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT**

**COUNTY  
EXTENSION  
WORK**

*Virginia Agricultural Extension Service*

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1959

Essex

**County**

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#### TYPES OF AGRICULTURE IN ESSEX COUNTY

Essex County is in the northern part of the southwestern section of Virginia. It is located on the Tidewater Trail, in the Rappahannock River Valley. Bounded on the East by the Rappahannock River, sister counties of Caroline, King and Queen, and Middlesex.

Essex county is one of the smaller counties, with three magisterial districts, with a total of 160,000 acres of land in its boundaries. 67.4% of this is in cultivation and the average size farm is 176 acres, according to the 1954 Census of Agriculture.

The Soils are principally of the coastal texture commonly found in the Tidewater area. Kempsville and Sassafrass are very prominent over the county, well suited for grain, grasses and livestock. General farming is most predominate, with some specialized farming in a few areas. At one time tomatoes, watermelons and fruits were a large contributor to the welfare of the county. At least five commercial canneries were operating in the county, this is history now, two such operate for a few weeks for tomatoes.

Livestock production is on the increase, with better boars and bulls entering each year for improvement. Larger laying flocks are found in the county each year, and fewer family size flocks.

Oystering business is on the decline as an individual concern with more commercial operation in action. Fishing is on the decline.

Industries are principally lumber manufacturing, and shipping out of the area. At present one Textile plant is being built in the county, that will when completed will employ locally about 500 men in a period of 10 years.

We have fewer farmers who are making farming as a business, they are renting out their farms, seeking employment in other places, because they are not able to compete with high cost of operation, labor and size of operation.

#### I. COUNTY ORGANIZATION AND LEADERS

The County Advisory Board was organized in 1936, with thirteen members at that time, representing organized and un-organized communities, farmers, ministers, layman and housewives. The board serves as a steering committee for the agent and other clubs in the county.

The Board serves as a guide post for the agent's Program of Work and the county Long-Time Plan of Work in the county.

The Board meets twice a year and as often when the necessity arises. First meeting is to map out plans for the year, set goals and appoint committees for the year, near the end of the year, it meets to report accomplishments and evaluate the years work.

The County Advisory Board sponsors the County-Wife Farmers' picnic, community tours when held and send representatives to State meetings, bare the expense of same. The Board also urges farmers to visit the Agricultural Experimental Station

in the area of its field day.

The Community Clubs, there are six organized in the thickly settled communities of the county, These clubs are well organized, and serve the community as the fact finding center, where community leaders and members meet, discuss and find ways to improve their standard of living.

These six community clubs embrace more than three hundred families who live within the organized community and are affected by community church, school or other ties. These clubs serve the people and the local farm agent through their findings, surveys, meetings and individual contacts. These clubs are also served as the training point for community and neighborhood leaders. These leaders usually are officers for most part, occasionally they are just the plain people of the community who the majority select to head or do a special piece of work in the community that others may learn from. More than 90 leaders serve the people of the county in more than one capacity, as demonstrators, or cooperating leaders to the main leader.

Many of the voluntary leaders are leaders who have served continuously for many years, they seem to look forward to being present at community and county affairs. Usually bringing other people with them. As a result, these older leaders have been influential in getting younger persons interested in serving as Junior leaders to younger people and helping 4-11

members. Examples of such work may be found in the leadership of Mrs. Sadie Brooks in the Center Cross Community. Three years ago Mrs. Brooks received training in Upholstry work from two visiting home demonstration agents in a two-day Upholstry Clinic. Since that time she has assisted her Homemakers Club members on two occasions, yearly in the same type of training. Mrs. Brooks not only serves her community club but the County as an official delegate to State Extension meetings and always ready to assist when called upon.

Another leader who has served in a similiar capacity, is Mrs. Louise Washington in the Dunnsville Community, Her special interest is Egg production and poultry. Mrs. Washington demonstrates to the community that money can be made from eggs and poultry. She told me this summer, that on a number of occasions her poultry flock has come to the aid of the farm operation during drought and rainy periods when harvest was short. Men also serve, in the field of leadership, with livestock, swine, and crops. Mr. Hamilton Fortune of the Hustle Community spearheaded the first improved year-round grazing program in the County and still leads in that capacity, with registered and graded livestock and swine.

A new field for leadership has recently opened up in the county, that is in the field of Water Safety Program. The project is two years old, as sponsored by the Local Chapter of the American

Red Cross in learn to swim. To begin with adults were few who had had any experience in swimming. Few did venture with the younger group, in two years our adults have been qualified as juniors leaders in Water Safety.

There is a large area for leadership and training in this work, due to the long shore line of the Rappahannock River and the many inland streams in the county. Also, there is an ever increasing number of farm ponds in the county. This was very much in evidence for training of young boys and girls, when two brothers were drowned in the county in 1958.

## II. MAJOR PROJECTS 1959

### 1. Swine Sanitation and Improvement

Situation--Over a period of five years, the 1959 Agricultural Census shows that twenty more farmers reported that the total returns from the sales of hogs rates third to the sales of cattle and eggs, respectively.

It is the belief here in the county that too many farmers are loosing money in hogs, because they attempt to raise hogs and pigs on the same ground that they have for the last 5 to 10 years.

Too many neglect proper feeding practices in feeding, disregarding any sanitation measures.

Too many farmers fail to do any workimg of the pigs and hogs.

Too many fail to recognize that breed has something to do with the quality of the hog and the meat.

Goal--Continue to use demonstrations over the county in:

- (a) Sanitation
- (b) Feeding
- (c) Rotation

To get more farmers to purchase Purebred swine or use high grade breeding stock.

Approach to the Problem--Through group and individual discussions the merits of good clean and fast growing pigs and hogs where ever possible. To enlighten the grower on what he can expect in way improvements in growth and greater returns for feed consumed. After the farmer recognizes his problem furnish him with what ever information and assistance necessary to help him correct his problems.

Results--In sanitation work with swine for 1959, fifteen farmers made changes in housing of hogs, either through new structures or improvements on already existing structures, lights were added to five for farrowing. Three farmers are now using cement floors and drainage valleys included to help to keep them dry. One farmer installed Frost proof hydrant in his hog feeding area for ample water supply, using reinforced steel sanitary tanks for fresh water.

Wood shavings and saw dust are the most popular bedding in this area where the pens are kept reasonably. Most farmers avoid straw in farrowing pens, because of the tendency to pile it up and sometimes trap the pigs and mash or crush them.

The "A" type farrowing house is being used in a number of cases as a farrowing house where there are a few sows to farrow pigs. When not in use for farrowing it becomes a shelter from the heat and cold. Seven such houses are located over the county. The multiple farrowing house is the most popular where more than three sows are kept. Five such houses are located in the county.

Rotation and grazing are on the increase, three such units were in operation this year, with more than 150 hogs and pigs involved.

Four farmers took part in the Feed pig sale this year, selling more than 150 pigs and shoats. Two will take part in the December sale.

Since we are shifting to the meat type of hog and the housewife demands a more choice cut of meat, the cross with the bacon-type hog is ever increasing. There is a large demand for the Yorkshire breed, as foundation stock to head the herd, five such boars and gilts were purchased at the Purebred swine sales this year.

As a result of the Swine Sanitation Program for the last three years we have been very pleased, First, we have had fewer

and hogs from worms, and outbreaks in contagious diseases, particularly Hog Cholera. Second, we have had more hogs graded on the local sales, as top quality hogs. Third, that our baby pigs have lived and developed into healthy and thrifty hogs faster than heretofore.

## 2. Poultry Flock Improvement and Egg Production

Situation--According to the 1954 Agricultural Census, the total returns from the sales of poultry and poultry products in Essex County, rates second to the sale of cattle. There is a great demand for poultry and poultry product, both from the standpoint of quality and quantity. There is ample amount of feed grown in the county to maintain a ration with the use of poultry feed supplement added.

### Goals:

1. To get more and larger laying flock established over the county where there is interest in poultry work.
2. To continue to stress the use of the best strains of poultry whether it be for layers or broilers.
3. To encourage the use of records as a means of determining profits or loss.

Approach to the Problem--To continue to help families and individuals analyze their problems, furnish factual information of records of success and failures. To help them obtain the best foundation stock possible.

Results--With the downward trend in price for poultry and its products this year in this area, it has been no little glory for producers. One broiler producer went out of business and returned to other employment.

With the low price for the dressed poultry offered in the food stores numbers of families refused to purchase baby chickens for home use and to increase their flocks.

In spite of the high cost of feeds (commercial) some families managed to stay in poultry business. It was done through careful management, culling and selling quality products. However, those farmers who were willing to see it through are reporting that they are beginning to make some money over and above the maintenance cost, and are able to make some improvements. Three such are satisfied at present:

1. Mrs. Louise Washington, Dunnsville Community, reported that her 800 hens have been able to give her a regular monthly income

by selling directly to customers at 50c per dozen regardless of the high cost of commercial feeds. Mrs. Washington sells commercially and to direct consumers.

2. Mrs. Clara Bayton in the Ozeana Community with two hundred layer sells to consumers and commercials. She maintains her operation supplementing with home grown feeds.

3. Mrs. Laura Harris, Center Cross Community with 1,000 layers at the beginning of the year, through strict culling and management now has regular customers, who buy 15 to 20 dozen per week, in addition to the smaller buyers. She has been in business only 18 months, she reports a profit above feed cost.

### 3. Home Improvement

Situation--In search for information about the characteristics of Essex County, I found 1950 Census of Population, Volume 11, Part 46 for Virginia, that in Essex County, 68.7% of the population of the county has less than \$2,000.00 income and that largest number of families and unrelated individuals have an income of from \$500.00 to \$999.00 per year. It also revealed that the largest number of individuals in the county according to age fall in the group from 10 to 14 years of age. Usually this group in the home is the most crowded.

#### Goals:

1. To get more sleeping space established or added. In some cases the rooms have never been complete, even though they exist.
2. To get more homes painted inside and out.
3. To encourage more Running Water in the home.
4. To work with young couples to get established to themselves.

Approach to Problem, Home Improvement--During regular visits in the communities, observe conditions, take inventory and hold conversation with such families through community meetings, churches and gatherings. Talk the matter over with the people. Find out their wants and desires, when made known, work with them in solving their problems. Assist them in finding the help needed, in estimating the cost where they can get the best materials for money invested and labor cost for improvements.

Work with young couples in assisting them in location of available land, furnish to them, if needed, information on where they can secure assistance financially, if needed.

Results--When farm families have been able with some assistance to lift themselves up and change their standards of living, the family seems to have a new outlook on life and its means. This cannot be measured in terms of dollars and cents. But there is a satisfaction that seems to exist between the members of the family, family relationship seems to improve, the children take a new pride in life and feel a part of the family. They seem to stay home longer, and take a more active part in the community way of life.

Each year the county goal is established on basis of request during the previous year for demonstrations in certain improvements, especially Running Water in the Home. Not all request of complied with because of time and location. However, over a large area of the county certain demonstrations are established in home improvement work. Four such demonstrations were conducted in Water Installization.

In the Supply Community, the Mansfield Colman family witnessed a demonstration in Installing Running Water in the Kitchen and in the yard. In 1960 the Coleman family plans to complete the demonstration. This demonstration was witnessed by 11 families.

In the Champlain Community, the Waugh Family installed a Complete Running Water system in the home. This demonstration was conducted jointly by the Local Farm Agent and Plumbing Contractor.

In the Hustle Community, the J. L. Holmes completed a Running Water Demonstration was started a number of years ago by installing a complete bath room unit, this was established with the cooperation of the husband, agent and carpenter.

In the Millers Community, the agent worked very closely with a young couple in planning, building, and completing their home. As to size, wiring, plumbing, heating and painting. The young couple are now living in their new home and taking part in the community program.

Thirteen homes over the county were improved on the outside they had not had any paint or other improvements for a long time. Five homes were enlarged by added rooms and closets. Painting on the inside took an up turn, due mainly to added income from outside of farm work.

#### 4. Crops and Soils

Situation--The need for more lime and phosphote in Essex County is evident by the ever increasing number of field that

are growing Broom Sage and Sassafras bushes. Also, with fields that are in some crops, especially corn. We are still in need of more humus to be added to the soil, and more complete fertilizers.

Goals, Method of Approach:

1. Use the Experimental Station locally as evidence of gains to be had through study of work being done there.
2. Get more farmers to have their soils tested for need of lime and fertilizer requirement.
3. To improve our storage space so that we can sell grain at a time when prices are more favorable.
4. To improve our methods of weed control.

We must put more emphasis on results as obtained at the Virginia Agricultural Experimental Station, if some farmers are to stay in the business of farming. To do this we must avail the farmers with more information as to the results during meetings, visits and office calls.

Take certain farmers on tours of other farm in and outside of the county to see certain improvements, where needed and study their results.

To study cost of additional insect, and rat-proof storage space on other farms, to help improve or increase our own.

Results--With certain farmers who are really farming and make a life business out of it, storage and a fair market price is the big item of concern. Most of the farmers have to sell us the harvest because of limited storage, need of ready cash and rush against weather. Two farmers used temporary storage space by the use of net wire bins, this was only for a short time. Five farmers reported that they had to add new bins in their barns and sheds to suffice, others used space on other farms which was very much unsatisfactory due to the condition of the building and other insects and rodents.

5. Home Gardens

Situation--Some farmers contend that with the very heavy infestation of insects, and the ever increasing new ones each year it is unprofitable to worry about a home garden. Other contend that the time element is worthless, other say they do not have means of cultivation.

Goals:

1. To establish with interested families good year-round gardens, invite them over to see such through the neighbors and leaders.
2. To attempt to influence the family through the 4-H member, if one is in the family, if possible.
3. To get two families if possible to swap labor for service in cultivation and plowing the garden.

Method of Approach--Through the monthly garden circular and demonstrations. Regular visits to check on progress is getting established and problems encountered in planting and insects.

Results--Three things have been noted in this field, First, that we have new varieties of vegetables grown that have not existed in some gardens before. Second, that through the garden circular many families say that they did not know that certain vegetables could be grown in this area and third, more winter hardy vegetables are found in gardens this season than heretofore.

### III 4-H CLUB WORK

#### Four-H Council

Four-H Club work in the county is set up under the standard pattern for the State, having the 4-H council heading all local clubs. Four clubs make up the county council of twelve members and leaders. The council meets at least three times a year. First, for organizational and planning. Second, for plans for State meeting, electing delegates and finance, and third, for reporting results.

#### Four-H Clubs

There are four such clubs in the county with one hundred and twelve boys and fifty-nine girls enrolled, conducting one hundred and seventy-four projects. Each club has all officers necessary for conducting a regular club meeting, parliament procedures according to their capabilities and training.

#### Goals:

1. To continue to strengthen 4-H club work through a larger participation on part of older youth and parents.
2. To work for a larger and more creditable completing of work started at the beginning of the year.

3. To encourage the selection of projects that are practicable and within the members cope of understanding.

Method of Procedure--To spend sufficient time with the member and explain the nature of the project, its adaptability to his surrounding, and what he should expect to get out of the work as a result of his efforts. To use more leader demonstration technique in training members in 4-H work. To visit each member at least two times per year or more personal contact, checking on project, and talking with parents. To encourage recreation, as well as project work in all club work.

Result-- Of the one hundred and seventy-four projects started, eighty-one were reported as completed. These included forty-two in vegetable growing, six in poultry, fifteen in swine, eleven in tractor, six in beautification of home grounds, and one in safety around the home.

Special training was given to two teams of four-H members, each in planting small seeds, and spraying and dusting insects in the gardens. Two teams were instructed in swine innoculating and one in poultry.

Three clubs received training in indoor recreation, and eleven members received training in Water Safety through enrolling in the Red Cross Chapter in the county.

Three, 4-H club members attended State 4-H Short Course, three members attended the Wildlife and Conservation School, and four members attended Tractor Maintenance School held at Virginia State College, Petersburg, Virginia, during 1959.

#### IV. COOPERATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

It is the policy of the Farm Agents office to work very closely with all agents in the county that serve farm people and families.

Goal:

1. To acquaint all people where ever possible of all agencies whether local, state or federal that are in the county, their work and what these agencies have to offer, in service or financial aid. How they can get in contact with them and what is expected of them for service.

Method of Approach-- Through meetings and personal contact and calls.

Results-- Have been very gratifying, as a result of close cooperation with other agencies in the county. By working with the school principal and teachers, the school buildings are made available for meetings and discussions. With governmental agencies have been very cooperative and in turn the agent has attempted to return the same favor. With Red Cross Chapter, as a result of full participation in its program and drives, we were able to conduct our second annual Water Safety Program in the county with more than 65 swimmers receiving instructions.