

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE

in

NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA

PLAN OF WORK

for

1960

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County Agent

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THE GENERAL SITUATION IN THE CITY OF NEWPORT NEWS

The City of Newport News is made up of an area of 67 square miles and includes what was formerly Warwick County, in addition to the old metropolitan area of Newport News. It is an odd shaped land area, 20 miles in length and varying 1-4 miles in width, located on the strip of what is called the Great Peninsula. It is bounded by Hampton Roads to the south, the James River to the west, James City County to the north, and York County and the City of Hampton to the east.

The city is governed by a City Manager - City Council and has within its borders the heaviest concentration of industry and military bases found in Virginia. Shipping and shipbuilding provide employment for more than 15,000 people and, in addition to these, there are several thousand more engaged in related activities of oystering, crabbing, fishing, and other types of employment closely associated with water. The remaining working population is engaged in providing contractual and retailing services as needed to provide food, clothing, and shelter for the residents in the area.

The extension office is conveniently located approximately mid-way, both geographically and population wise. The white residents of old metropolitan Newport News and those of rapidly developing Upper Warwick have little common interest.

For extension planning purposes, the entire area is considered urban. The population is approximately 120,000 with 34-36% negro. This leaves us with a clientele of approximately 15,000 white families with

Per capita income for Newport News	\$1,618
State	1,472
U.S.A.	1,758
Household income for Newport News	6,107
State	5,709
U.S.A.	6,005

The area is classed as a high cost-of-living area -- next highest in the country, with Washington rating tops. But wages, except for civil service and professional, are relatively low.

Schools are adequate and additional facilities are added as needed to meet changing population trends. This past year the telephone system has been reorganized so that all residents of the city are reached from the office without toll charge. This is a big advantage as the agent can now use the telephone for what formerly necessitated a home visit. Electric service and either natural or bottled gas is available. Most areas now are serviced by city water and sanitary sewers. All roads are hard surface except those within a few newly developed housing projects.

The health and medical care has become more efficient in the past few years. Increased facilities are available, and a new hospital, which will accommodate 306 patients, is in the planning stage with construction expected to begin within the next two years and completion scheduled for the next 3 - 5 years.

There are four large, and several smaller, shopping centers, all of which have one or more supermarkets, located at strategic points throughout the city.

There is a city department of Recreation and Parks which coordinates city recreation, as well as furnishing supervised recreation at the city recreation building and operating two swimming pools.

There are available to the youth on the Peninsula many opportunities to become involved in activities of Cubs, Brownies, Girl and Boy Scouts, YM and YWCA programs, Boys' and Girls' Clubs, and well rounded church and school programs.

The agricultural situation in the City of Newport News is perhaps unique in the State of Virginia. The open land has an appraised value in excess of \$2,000 per acre and is in great demand for housing sites, with individual lots 100 x 150 feet bringing an average of \$6,000, with prices of \$10,000 - \$15,000 being commonplace in more desirable areas. Lots overlooking the river are very scarce and demand prices up to \$35,000.

Taxes are high, when compared to strictly rural localities, which places an additional handicap on our farmers who are trying to compete with other areas. There is a great competition for labor, and the prevailing wage scale makes it all but impossible for local farmers to find help willing to work the necessary hours at a wage the farmer can afford. Perhaps this is the reason that our 40 remaining farms are mostly family operated units that have become very efficient and intensified.

Three highways parallel each other the entire length of the city and have cut our remaining large farms into small sections which are isolated from each other, and the heavy city traffic makes it both dangerous and time-consuming for livestock, men, or equipment to safely move from one area to the other. Five farms were subdivided during the year 1959, and indications are that more are to follow this same pattern in the near future.

EXTENSION PLAN FOR 1960

The extension plan of work for the City of Newport News was developed through meetings and conferences with committees and individuals who are using the VPI Agricultural Extension Service to enable them to farm more profitably and non-farmers to derive more pleasure from their homes, lawns, and gardens.

The groups included are:

- City Agricultural Extension Planning Board
- Various City Departments
- Peninsula Dairy Herd Improvement Association
- Artificial Breeders' Association
- 4-H City Council and 4-H Clubs
- Tri 4-H Fair
- 4-H Leaders' Organization
- Jamestown 4-H Camp
- Home Demonstration Clubs
- Colonial Soil Conservation District
- Lower Peninsula Agricultural Extension School
- Tidewater Beekeepers' Association
- Peninsula Rabbit Breeders' Association
- ASC Committee
- Chamber of Commerce
- Downtown Merchants' Association
- Federation of Women's Clubs
- Federation of Garden Clubs
- Boy Scouts of America

Parkview Civic League

Department of Public Schools

Florists' Association

Farmers Home Administration

DAIRYING

Situation -

There were 9 active dairies within the city at the beginning of 1959, with the entire milk production being marketed locally through a cooperative. Two of these herds have succumbed to the attractive real estate market, and there are 7 active dairies here at this time. These dairymen are very receptive to extension suggestions and all are, at the present time, using artificial breeding. Six dairies are on DHIA testing, while the one large dairy has its own testing procedure.

All of these dairies have at least 10 months of continuous grazing each year. Some are sending their calves and dry cows to areas with cheaper overhead. Many are bringing hay and other bulky essentials from more rural sources. In many instances, dual, and even triple, crops are being grown on the same land each year in an effort to secure as much income as possible from the limited land available.

Dairy production averages are high, with one of our herds having the highest average in the state for the year 1958.

Objectives -

- (1) Increase efficiency of production through larger use of roughages.
 - a. Using fertilizer based on soil analysis and needs of crop.
 - b. Use of oats, clover, alfalfa, and surplus pasture for spring silage.

Dairying - cont'd.

- (2) Assist Colony Cooperative and others in directing more milk into fluid consumption.
- (3) Encourage the artificial breeding program.
- (4) Assist DHIA supervisor.

Methods -

- (1) Hold one-day dairy school conducted by Dairy and Economics specialists from VPI.
- (2) Put on at least 2 agricultural programs on dairying jointly with James City.
- (3) Take information to farmers by timely visits, news articles, and letters.
- (4) Inform non-farm groups of dairy farmers' problems.
- (5) Cooperate with artificial breeding technician by informing livestock owners of his services and helping him overcome any problems.
- (6) Plan a dairy tour during summer to see how our neighbors are providing summer pasture and silage.
- (7) To create a better understanding between the DHIA supervisor and the members.
- (8) Encourage DHIA members to utilize their herdbook to greater advantage.
- (9) Encourage DHIA members to use "EDPM" - electronic records system.

POULTRY

Situation -

Newport News is in a deficient situation in regards to poultry and eggs, with most of the eggs produced locally being marketed locally and usually directly to the consumer. However, with the increased emphasis on quality eggs and the quality of eggs available in the local retail markets improving greatly while the price spread has been decreasing, several of our larger producers are showing interest in affiliation with a large egg marketing facility in order to insure a reliable market outlet for their product.

Objectives -

- (1) Place more emphasis on lowering production costs.
- (2) Encourage the use of better breeds of layers.
- (3) Encourage even year round production.
- (4) Encourage candling of eggs and better holding facilities.
- (5) Encourage roadside or on the farm outlets for eggs and dressed poultry where applicable.
- (6) Discourage the extremely small operator from entering this highly competitive field.

Methods -

- (1) Attend the Tidewater Area Poultry School.
- (2) Attend poultry program of James City Agricultural Board.
- (3) Make timely visits.
- (4) Work with specialists from VPI to improve practices.
- (5) Keep poultrymen informed through letters and news articles.
- (6) Encourage attendance at commercial poultry meetings.
- (7) Encourage 4-H poultry exhibits at the Tri 4-H Fair & Atlantic Rural Exposition.

AGRONOMY

Situation -

With the exception of soybeans, crops produced in the City of Newport News are consumed there. Much of the land is in ladino, grass, or alfalfa and grass mixtures for pastures and hay. Corn, small grains, and sudan for hay and silage make up the rest except for the small soybean acreage grown for retail markets. Most of the pastures destroyed by the extreme drought of the past years have been reseeded and are producing normally.

Objectives -

- (1) Proper fertilization based on soil tests.
- (2) Early planting and early varieties as drought insurance.
- (3) More emphasis on winter and supplemental pastures.
- (4) Control alfalfa weevil as recommended.
- (5) Seed cover crops on corn land.
- (6) Introduce recommended varieties of all crops.
- (7) Secure chick weed control.

Methods -

- (1) Present timely agronomy topics at two agricultural school meetings.
- (2) Distribute information on recommended seed varieties.
- (3) Contact seed and supply dealers and encourage them to stock recommended varieties and products.
- (4) Encourage farmers to attend area agronomy school.
- (5) Check alfalfa fields for appearance of the alfalfa weevil and advise controls as deemed necessary.

HOME GROUNDS AND HOME GARDENS

Situation -

Newport News, particularly the old upper Warwick area, is an area developing rapidly with many new families. Most of these people settled here because there was more room available and because of the desire to have beautiful lawns, trees, shrubbery, and occasionally a vegetable garden. The majority of these people have not owned homes before and are novices in the field of horticulture. There is much demand on this agent's time by people with a sincere desire to improve the physical appearance of their property. These people are appreciative of our educational efforts and, for the most part, follow recommendations to the letter. This was shown very clearly by the cooperation of the 40 Home Demonstration Clubs, the 26 Garden Clubs, and the 6 Women's Clubs in the conducting of the local Garden Clinic just completed for the second time in this area. This cooperation is, I think, indicative of the increasing desire for civic beautification in this area.

Objectives -

- (1) Improve the appearance of individual homesites.
- (2) Protect plantings from insects and diseases.
- (3) Improve production and quality of garden vegetables.
- (4) Make available research data as recommended.
- (5) To improve soil conditions.
- (6) To encourage use of the Agricultural Experiment Stations at Holland and Norfolk.
- (7) To work with the Department of Parks in the establishment of a new city park.

Home Grounds and Home Gardens - cont'd.

Methods -

- (1) Hold leader training meetings for Home Demonstration clubs.
- (2) Conduct a local Garden Clinic using specialists from the Horticultural Department of VPI and Norfolk Truck Experiment Station, and local nurserymen as resource people.
- (3) Hold pruning demonstrations over city area.
- (4) Use timely information in bi-monthly column in Sunday paper.
- (5) Make talks to Garden and Civic Clubs.
- (6) Will hold Leader Training meetings for Peninsula Scout Council.
- (7) Cooperate with local nurserymen and seed and supply dealers in conducting a local horticultural clinic.
- (8) Provide soil testing service and advice on fertilizing lawns and gardens.
- (9) Maintain adequate supply of reference material for distribution.
- (10) Encourage the use of insecticides to control grubs on lawn areas.
- (11) Encourage an effective spray program for the home grounds.
- (12) Encourage the use of recommended varieties of all plants.

FRUIT PRODUCTION

Situation -

During the past year, commercial fruit growers in the City of Newport News have taken even a worse beating than dairymen at the hands of realtors.

Six of the major ¹⁰peach orchards are now subdivisions, and two of the remaining 4 orchards show indications of following the same route within the next 18 months.

The high yield of fruit per tree, usually 5 to 7 bushels of peaches on the average, and the excellent prices received by local producers have made it possible to have very profitable fruit production in this area. The water on 3 sides has reduced frost damage to a minimum, and, were it not for residential real estate pressures, fruit production in this area would probably continue very satisfactorily. However, at the present time, there is very little likelihood of continuation on a commercial basis.

Objectives -

- (1) Improve yield of fruits.
- (2) Improve quality of fruit/
- (3) Develop marketing opportunities.
- (4) Develop better pruning methods.
- (5) Develop more timely spray schedules.

Methods -

- (1) Increase attendance at the Area Fruit School.
- (2) Pass on marketing information.
- (3) Pass on spray information.

Fruit Production - cont'd.

- (4) Pass on varietal information.
- (5) Hold pruning demonstration.
- (6) Help with local retail marketing.

LIVESTOCK

At the present time, there is not enough interest in livestock to justify any program except individual help for the 2 or 3 livestock owners in the city. This does not include Dairy.

BEEKEEPING

Interest in beekeeping in Tidewater Virginia has increased to the point where special attention by the agent is warranted. It is the intention of this agent to continue offering assistance to this group whenever possible. This agent plans to -

- (1) Assist with 4 seasonal beekeeping meetings
- (2) Encourage attendance at the State Beekeeping meeting
- (3) Encourage attendance at the Institute of Rural Affairs
- (4) Use timely news articles

4-H CLUBS

Situation -

All 4-H Clubs meet out of school, twice monthly. The meetings are conducted by leaders, with the agent attending only a few times yearly. There is a strong girls' program, but a weak boys' program due mostly, I think, to the lack of space for agricultural projects.

A survey was made of 4 of the 17 city schools. Children in 5th and 6th grades were contacted, and results indicated that 850 desired to join 4-H as soon as leaders are available.

Objectives -

- (1) To plan and put in effect a 4-H program that would meet the needs of Newport News boys and girls of each age group
- (2) Plan and adapt projects that meet the needs of an urban situation

Methods -

- (1) Work with existing clubs to develop an interesting and instructive program.
 - a. Encourage participation by the members
 - b. Each member assume some responsibility for the club program
 - c. Timely visits to insure successful projects
 - d. Enlist cooperation and support of parents
- (2) Attempt to enlist leaders for additional clubs from church and civic groups
- (3) Encourage Honor Club
 - a. Develop leadership by having each person accept responsibility for some phase of club work and give them assistance

4-H Clubs cont'd.

only as needed.

b. Plan activities which will appeal to this older group and contribute to their character and personality

- (4) Continue to rely on cooperation from the Area All-Stars and give them recognition for their accomplishments.
- (5) Hold annual 4-H picnic
- (6) Encourage attendance at Short Course
- (7) Hold Tri 4-H Fair
- (8) Hold Achievement Day
- (9) Encourage a sound recreational program
- (10) Plan a 4-H trip

FARM AND HOME DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

At the present time there are 3 families enrolled in our farm and home development program. Two of these are poultrymen who have been moving a large portion of their eggs through military outlets which are now being closed to them. This agent is presently helping with the establishment of a new marketing outlet through the local milk routes with the hope that it will alleviate the situation.

The third family is our one remaining general farm which is depending on poultry and crops for a livelihood. This family operation is very efficient, though almost too eager to adopt unproven ideas.

As a representative of Virginia Polytechnic Institute in this urban community, it is the opinion of this agent that the Extension Service can render a valuable service to various groups and individuals in this locality. Many management, marketing, gardening, landscaping and miscellaneous problems arise when information and advice from a disinterested authority is most welcome.

Although there is very little demand for Soil Conservation or Agricultural Stabilization Conservation work in the city, this agent will continue to work very closely with these two agencies in the hope that he can keep their aims and goals before this urban population.

