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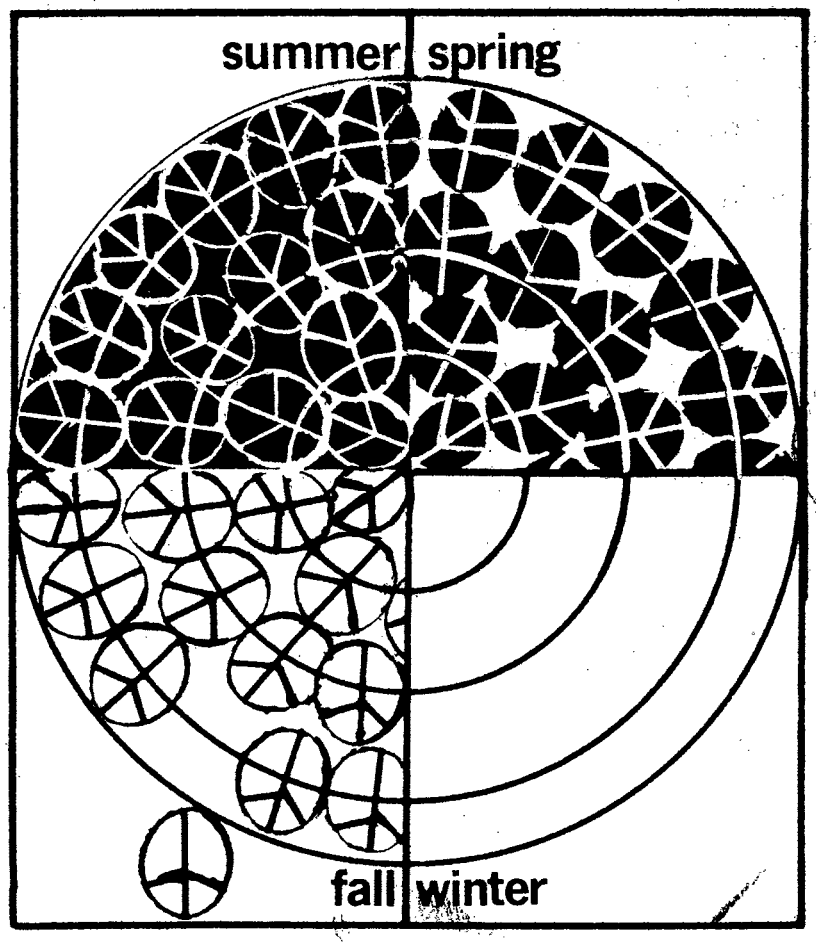

NOV 13 1967

the calendar of farm practices for minnesota

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Agricultural Extension Service, University of Minnesota

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MINNESOTA FARM PRACTICES CALENDAR

This report presents in seasonal sequence a number of important management practices. The purpose of this farm practices calendar is to improve management of Minnesota farm businesses. Good farm management is of prime importance not only to farmers but also to those who depend on farmers for food and fiber. Although government has entered every farming business in one way or another, the answers to most farm problems will be found only through the individual farmer's ability to effectively manage his production and marketing operations. Farming's basic problem is adjustment to changing economic conditions. Management differences are responsible for most variation in farmers' incomes. Thus the need for improved management challenges every farmer.

Use of this calendar will help farmers make sound decisions affecting overall farm management. Hindsight is always better than foresight, but the gap between the two can be narrowed.

A word of caution--adjustments must be made for regional and local variations in farm management practices. This is especially true for crop and livestock enterprises. Crucial practices in farm record and account keeping, however, are generally applicable throughout Minnesota.

--Milo J. Peterson

The authors wish to thank the many subject matter specialists who assisted in checking the accuracy of the calendar of farm practices. Special acknowledgment is due those listed below.

Truman R. Nodland	Agricultural Economics
Harry W. Kitts	Agricultural Education
Orrin C. Turnquist	Agricultural Extension, Horticultural Science
Robert W. Berg	Agricultural Extension, Poultry
Arnold K. Solstad	Agricultural Engineering
Paul M. Burson	Soil Science
Robert M. Jordan	Animal Science
Robert J. Meade	Animal Science
Richard D. Goodrich	Animal Science
C. Gustav Hard	Agricultural Extension, Horticultural Science
Neil W. Miles	Agricultural Extension, Horticultural Science
Arthur Hutchins	Horticultural Science
Harley J. Otto	Agricultural Extension, Agronomy
Earl S. Bergerud	Agricultural Extension, 4-H Club and YMW
J. C. Meiske	Animal Science
Jesse B. Williams	Animal Science
P. K. Harein	Agricultural Extension, Entomology
W. F. Bear	Agricultural Engineering

FARM RECORDS AND ACCOUNTS

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Keep and use the Minnesota Farm Account Book											
Study and evaluate price trends and production prospects--make adjustments when necessary											
Beginning inventory			Check livestock numbers								End-of-year inventory
	Review last year's operation				Enter yields in Minnesota Farm Account Book as each crop is harvested						
	Check plans for coming year					Check livestock numbers			Check livestock numbers		
	Complete and file state and federal income tax statements				Midyear feed check						
							Feed lot summaries following sales of each lot of cattle				Close Account Book
			Check feed records								
										Trial balance in preparation for income tax report	
	Review outlook information										
	Study net worth statement				Crop acreage check						
		Prepare farm budgets of proposed changes									

SAFETY

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Use lead staffs and hurdles in handling livestock. Pens should be constructed for safety Lamps and stoves used for heating should be of safe, approved types Handle pitchforks, shovels, and axes with care--store in a safe place Use the right tool for the job in the shop; keep in proper place Keep all farm buildings clean and orderly to prevent fires and accidents					The tractor is the no. 1 farm killer For safer operation of all farm machines follow these five rules: (1) Slow down--operate at safe speed (2) Keep protective shields in place (3) Shut off power before servicing, cleaning, or adjusting (4) Work reasonable hours; avoid fatigue (5) Wear trim, snug-fitting clothing Use approved electric fencers: Homemade fencers are death traps Follow safe practices in operating power haying equipment Farm Chemicals: Read and heed label of instructions Wear recommended protective equipment: respirators, goggles, clothing				Use caution in corn picker operation Inspect electric wiring, make needed alterations Check and service heating system; chimneys, blowers, heating units Protect farm against rubbish and grass fires The major cause of farm fires: Defective and misused electrical equipment Check for adequate wiring Check for adequate grounding Check for protective fusing With power chain saws: (1) Keep stable footing (2) Shut off when moving and fueling (3) Fall trees carefully	

For fire protection:

(1) Fire extinguishers in all buildings, on every farm machine and automobile
(2) Separate circuit to water supply pump
(3) Safe and adequate ladders readily available
(4) Hoses available in lengths to reach roofs
(5) Family plan escape route in case of fire; practice fire drill

The safety and good health of the farmer and his family should be paramount in the planning and operation of the farm business

HOME GARDEN

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Plan garden--order seed					Practice shallow cultivation, spray or use plastic covers to control weeds						
		Plow gardens when ground is workable. Incorporate organic matter into soil									
		Apply complete fertilizer (10-10-10) to garden									
			Use cold frame								
					Can home supply				Store home supply		
					Buy transplants						
			Plant and set "cool" crops								
				Plant and set "warm" crops		Apply mulches					
		Control of soil insects			Spray to control diseases and insects						
		Chlordane			Use these chemicals:						
					For insects: (1) methoxychlor (2) malathion (3) DDT			For disease: (1) zineb (2) maneb		For weed control:	
						Follow manufacturer's directions					
						Plant fall vegetables					
					Plant sweet corn at 15-day intervals						
						Soil test					
						Apply lime if needed					

TREE FRUITS

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
	Plan home orchard										
				Plant fruit trees and small fruits							
		Order nursery stock									
		Prune trees									
				*Pink spray for apples				Soil test			
					Petal fall spray						
				First cover spray							
			Fertilize trees			First maggot spray					
							Apply maggot sprays at weekly intervals				
				Cultivate young trees							
								Harvest period for apples			
				*Petal fall spray for plums							
				Shuck fall spray							
									Clean up orchard		
								Check trees for adequate rodent protection			

*Follow recommendations in Home Fruit Spray Guide (Extension Pamphlet 184)

STRAWBERRIES AND SMALL FRUITS

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Select varieties to grow											
	Order nursery stocks										
		Prepare land									
		Add 4 bu. manure per 50 sq. ft.									
			Set plants								
				Apply 1 lb. 10-10-10 per 25 ft. of row							
STRAWBERRIES				Cultivate shallow							
							Harvest everbearing varieties				
					Mulch everbears with sawdust or wood chips						
				Remove bloom stalks on first year plantings						Apply winter mulch of coarse hay or straw	
		Uncover plants; leave mulch between rows		Spray when blooms and buds appear				Mow off old berry tops of June bearers immediately after harvest			
					Renovate old plantings						
					Apply 1 lb. of 10-10-10 per 25 ft. of row on renovation						
			Control insects and diseases - see Home Fruit Spray Guide (Extension Pamphlet 184)								
		Preplanting, planting, cultivation, and summer mulching practices outlined above also apply for raspberries									
RASPBERRIES									Remove old canes		
		Uncover, stake prune, and thin. Apply $\frac{1}{4}$-$\frac{1}{2}$ cup of 10-10-10 per hill		Spray at mid-May and mid-June						Cover with soil for winter protection, complete or tip	
						Harvest fruits					
			Control insects and diseases - see Home Fruit Spray Guide (Extension Pamphlet 184)								

LAWNS, SHADE TREES, SHRUBS, AND EVERGREENS

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Plan farmstead plantings, order seeds and plants								Order shelterbelt trees	Compost leaves		
		Start seeds of annual flowers indoors			outdoors						
Prune oaks		Prune shade trees (except maple)			*Prune evergreens only with definite purpose and according to growth habit					Apply protective winter mulches	
		Prune summer flowering shrubs			Cut lawn grass at least 1½" high						
			Prune spring flowering shrubs soon after blooming				Apply fertilizer to lawn based on soil test				
			Remove protective winter mulches				Sow grass seed				
			Plant trees and shrubs			Control lawn weeds				Plant shade trees	
								Plant evergreens			
						Control red spider on evergreens					
			Apply fertilizer to lawns					Prune maples		Prune shade trees	
					All watering should be adequately and thoroughly done for best results						
					Dust or spray with an all-purpose insecticide-fungicide to control insects and diseases; bimonthly applications						
					*See extension bulletin on evergreens						
Prepare landscape plans											

FARM FORESTRY

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Find market for farm woods products--select and harvest trees		Make necessary planting site preparations (disking, harrowing)			Shear pine Christmas trees			Plan windbreak, shelterbelt, and forest tree planting projects			
	Check on fire fighting equipment and arrange for help					Shear spruce Christmas trees			Prune conifer plantations for greens		
			Plant trees		Summer fallow heavy soils for shelterbelt plantings						
			Debud Christmas trees					Make necessary planting site preparations (plowing)			
								Order trees		Select and harvest Christmas trees and greens	
Cut or poison vines, culls, and undesirable trees in woods and plantations				Thin pine plantations. Peel and stack thinnings for fence posts				Treat seasoned fence posts with preservatives			
	Tap sugar maples for syrup			Poison pocket gophers in conifer plantations							
					Cultivate windbreak and shelterbelt plantings			Seek market for Christmas trees and greens			
Have lumber for home use milled and piled for seasoning						Check on fire fighting equipment and arrange for help			Apply rabbit repellent on shelterbelt trees		
Prune pine plantations								Fence farm woods and planting sites to protect from livestock			
				Maintain firebreaks by plowing or disking					Find market for farm woods products. Select and harvest trees		
									Prune pine plantations. Cut or poison vines, culls, and undesirable trees in woods and plantations		

FARM AND HOME IMPROVEMENT

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
HOME											
Interior Painting			Repair windows, screens, and doors		Exterior repair and painting			Repair roofs		Interior painting	
			Service air conditioning equipment. Lawn fertilizing and weed spray					Service heating system Check electrical circuits			
LIVESTOCK AND CROP BUILDINGS											
Interior building maintenance work		Check wiring			Remodel existing buildings			Check ventilation systems			
				Lightning protection		Paint buildings, repair roofs and siding					
FARM SERVICE CENTER											
Check condition of power and hand tools; sharpen and repair									Repair shop building		
Clean and reorganize shop									Shop clean-up		
Inventory tools; purchase those needed									Inspect equipment and order repair parts		
CROPS AND SOILS											
Check machinery for needed repairs								Construct waterways			
			Measure field acreage					Install drainage tile Layout contour strips			
LIVESTOCK											
Repair farrowing crates, sheep pens, feeding equipment, etc.			Check and repair fences				Repair silo unloading and feeding equipment				
			Repair movable housing and shelters					Service water system			
				Cast concrete projects				Cast concrete projects			

FARM EQUIPMENT AND MACHINERY

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Overhaul farm machinery				Service electric motors twice a year					Construct feeding equipment--		
	Paint farm machinery and equipment			Clean out fertilizer hoppers immediately after use--						Overhaul farm machinery	
Plan farm-shop building or farm shop in a machinery-storage building							Repair and construct farm equipment				
Figure bill of material for the building											
				Construct farm-shop building or machinery storage shed with a farm shop in it							
				———	———	———	———	———	———		
				Construct work bench, tool cabinets, storage bins, and shelves for the shop							
				———	———	———	———	———	———		
									Clean and rustproof farm machinery for storage, make minor repairs		
Plan for use of electricity									Winterize tractor		
				Keep machinery properly lubricated while in use							
				———	———	———	———	———	———		
Decide what pieces of equipment to buy, replace, repair, or rent for the coming year				During operation of equipment, keep a list of items to be repaired with service record of machine					Attend service schools on new equipment or review information on uses of present equipment		
Assemble operators' manuals, study them, and provide a library of all service literature									Read research reports		

LAND IMPROVEMENT

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
		Stake guide rows for contour plowing					Stake guide rows for contour plowing				
						Drain land (tile or open ditch)					
		Plow and work land on the contour									
			Construct terraces, diversion ditches, and grassed waterways			Construct terraces and diversion ditches					
						Construct grassed waterways					
Remove undesirable trees and brush from pastures						Clear crop land of brush and stones					
Conserve manure; keep barns well bedded; keep manure under shelter						Plan for next year's crop Take soil samples and determine fertilizer needs for next year's crop					
									Conserve manure		
Order fertilizer and take delivery									Order fertilizer and take delivery		
		Apply fertilizer				Apply lime and fertilizer					
			Do not burn over land or burn crop residues					Seed cover crops on open land			
				Keep a dense sod of grasses and legumes on all pastures and meadow land							

FORAGE CROPS

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
		Soil sampling						Soil sampling			
		Use certified seed of adapted grass and legume varieties				Straight seeding before Aug. 15		Disk soybean or grain stubble for seeding forages next spring			
		Fungicide treatment prior to inoculation of alfalfa						Plow for spring seeding			
		Inoculate legumes within 24 hours of seeding, keep in a cool place out of the sun					Clip new growth if weeds are a problem				
			Seed $\frac{1}{4}$" to $\frac{1}{2}$" deep on firm seedbed w/companion grain or control weeds chemically						Apply lime if needed for spring seeding of alfalfa		
		Apply needed fertilizer							Avoid grazing sudan after frost		
				Use MCP for broad leaf weeds in seeding							
				Seed supplemental forages--Sudan, sorghums, soybeans millet		Harvest sudan as pasture after 18" tall--grain developed for silage					
			Seed oats for silage, pasture, or hay		Second application of fertilizer if split application			Sow rye for spring pasture			
		Top-dress with needed nutrients				Do not graze sorghum Harvest as silage at dough stage					
				1st cutting For hay or silage. Use carbohydrate preservatives for high-moisture hay crop silage	2nd cutting For early bloom.		3rd cutting First cutting alfalfa in 3rd cutting before Aug. 31	Never cut or graze alfalfa after Sept. 1			

CORN AND SOYBEANS

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Secure adapted soybean varieties and corn hybrids							Plow sod land				
Use high quality certified soybean seed (see University of Minnesota miscellaneous reports 24 and 28)			Plow at least 3 weeks before planting unless corn is wheel track planted				Take soil samples and determine lime and fertilizer needs				
							Lime land if needed				
	Apply manure				Side-dress corn with nitrogen if needed				Adequate soybean or grain corn storage at 13 percent moisture		
			Apply fertilizer based on need				Cut corn for whole plant silage when 3/4 dented		Provide adequate ear corn storage to prevent loss		
		Measure acreage			Control insects						
			Fungicide treatment of seed				Avoid damaging beans in harvest; combine between 10-14 percent moisture				
			Inoculate soybeans					Determine yields			
			Prepare and calibrate planter								
				Cultivate shallow and use post emergence herbicides if needed to control weeds							
				Plant corn May 1-15				Plow down fertilizer			
				Plant soybeans after May 10							
				Apply pre-emergence herbicides (see extension folder 212)							
				Apply insecticides on corn if needed							
				Secure adequate stand of corn plants for moisture and fertilizer control							

SMALL GRAIN

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Select quality certified seed of adapted varieties (see University of Minnesota miscellaneous report 24)		Fungicide treatment of seed Use proper seeding rate; reduce when sown with forages Plant as early in April as possible	Plow or disk Apply fertilizer according to need and circumstances--required nitrogen is usually profitable	Chemical weed control for broadleaf weeds (see extension folder 212)	Harvest small grain when at 13 percent moisture, flax 11 percent	Plow or disk Cut and remove stubble when seeded to forages	Sow winter rye Rat proof bins Provide for adequate grain storage	Test soil			

PASTURE

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
			Select land to be seeded or reseeded to pasture								
Remove unwanted trees									Remove unwanted trees		
					Remove stumps, stones, and bushes						
			Take soil samples to determine lime and fertilizer needs								
Select adapted varieties of certified seed											
						Kill old sod by plowing and disking or by harrowing--make rough seedbed					
			Inoculate legumes within 24 hours of seeding. Store in cool place out of sun			Apply lime at disking of renovation					
			Apply required fertilizer								
			Sow a good seeding mixture with companion grain		Start grazing when 8-12" tall; limit graze the first year						
			Fence for rotation grazing								
			Top-dress pastures								
			Use flexible drag or harrow to scatter droppings					Avoid grazing after Sept. 10 except on last year of pasture			
				Do not begin grazing in spring before pasture is capable of sustaining livestock							
				Use rotation system of grazing for greater production							

DAIRY CATTLE

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
				Provide excess of grass-legume pasture, silage, and hay; feed grain mixture according to cow's production							
Provide excess of silage and good legume hay; feed grain mixture according to cow's production									Provide excess of silage and good legume hay; feed grain mixture to maximum intake		
				Weigh and test milk same date each month							
			Breed all heifers to freshen at 22-24 months and cows to freshen for even year-round milk production								
Permit cows to be dry for 2 months, start grain feeding 30 days before calving and get cows up to 20 lbs. daily by calving time											
			Dip navel cord of calf in iodine -- give calf 3 feedings of colostrum								
			Offer leafy hay and herd grain mix at 5 days								
Clip udders and flanks of cows				Select replacement heifer calves, sell other calves as veals or raise as feeding cattle						Clip udders and flanks of cows	
				Vaccinate replacement calves for Bang's at 4-8 months							
			Use extra care in obtaining cooperation of cow at milking time								
	Treat for lice	Fertilize pastures		Control flies by periodic spraying (Use latest recommended spray materials)						Treat for lice	
				Seed hybrid sudans for supplemental pasture							
				Keep cows off pasture until May 15				Consider quality of pasture in feeding hay and grain in line with milk production			
		Provide ample supply of clean drinking water, trace mineralized salt and steamed bone meal throughout the year									
				Keep daily records on estrus, breedings, calvings, and other events							

BEEF CATTLE

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
	Provide legume or good mixed hay for cows. Thin cows should have some grain			Provide an abundance of pasture for cows and calves					Feed low quality roughage and silage to cows		
				Plenty of clean water and trace-mineral salt should be available at all times							
		Cows calving Tatoo or identify calves	Feed bulls grain if necessary Make final yearling heifer selection before breeding according to Minnesota Beef Cattle Improvement Procedures	Castrate at 1 to 3 months	Breed cows for spring calves	Register pure breds		Wean at 6-7 months and select heifers according to Minnesota Beef Cattle Improvement Procedures	Vaccinate heifers for Brucellosis at 6 to 8 months	Pregnancy test all cows Sell non-breeding females and cows not settled	
	Trim feet			Spray or provide automatic treatment for fly control (treadle sprayers, etc.) Do not use DDT w/in 90 days of slaughter							
Spray or dust cattle for lice every 3 weeks				*See recommendations in current Fly Control Bulletin			Systemic treatment for ox warble		Spray for lice and mites		
			Annual TB and Leptospirosis tests may be made at any convenient time								

SHEEP

Consider that: 1) White face ewes shear 3-5# more wool than black face ewes; 2) Jan.-Feb. lambs require warm shelter, creep feed, and June marketing; 3) don't creep feed April-May lambs--rely on good pasture for economical gains; 4) A ewe produces 80-90 percent of her total milk production during the 1st 10 weeks; thereafter she eats more grass and deposits more parasite eggs than her small milk contribution is worth, and 5) a sheep enterprise should contribute dollars not dimes to your farm operation. Enlarge your flock.

Provide lambing pens, heat lamps, etc.

Separate ewes ready to lamb

Shear ewes before lambing if shelter available, otherwise crutch

Be on hand for lambing. Provide for identification of ewes and lambs

Start feeding 1/2-3/4# grain according to condition of ewes 4-6 weeks before lambing to avoid pregnancy disease and assure adequate milk and strong lambs

Feed ewes 1-1½# grain after lambing

Start creep feeding lambs at 2 weeks; continue if you plan on selling lambs by July 1

Castrate and dock lambs 1-2 weeks

Shear, dip, and trim feet if needed. Mark all ewes to be culled

Provide for tick control

Drench ewes before going to pasture

Worm lambs each 4-6 weeks--use copper sulfate, phenothiazine, or thiobenzole

Keep phenothiazine-salt-complete-mineral mix in self-feeder during summer months

Watch ewes and lambs for maggots

Wean lambs at 3½-4 months on basis of amount and quality of pasture. Provide excellent pasture or feed out in drylot

To reduce costs, place ewes on sparse or unpalatable pasture as lambs are weaned.

Market lambs as they become fat and weigh 85-95#

Select big ewe lambs, feed well, breed to lamb as yearlings, or buy western white-faced ewes of large frame

Buy purebred rams--avoid small and undeveloped rams

Sell cull ewes

Make maximum use of economy feeds

Crossbreed for top production

$1 saved in feed or labor cost equals an increase of 5 percent in lambing or 5#/lamb

Breed for:

Feb. lambs

March lambs

April lambs

Shear ram 3 weeks before breeding

Change color in ram marking harness every 16 days

Decide when to breed on basis of feed, shelter, and pasture availability

To increase lambing percentages, flush ewes 2-3 weeks before breeding by placing on good pasture or grain

See that ewes get sufficient exercise, space, feed, etc.

SWINE

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Determine possibility of year-round farrowing for greater profits, better use of facilities and equipment, lower overhead cost per pig marketed, and better labor distribution											
Blood test sow herd for brucellosis											
Feed modern, well-balanced rations to all swine in keeping with age, state of production											
Treat sows for mange if necessary-- 2-3 weeks before farrowing											
					Feed a nutritionally adequate ration during prebreeding			Repeat procedure outlined in first half of year for each successive farrowing in accordance with farm plan			
Get farrowing pen and sow ready for farrowing											
					Breed for next litter						
Feed laxative diet one week before farrowing											
					Register purebreds						
Follow principles of McLean County Sanitation System											
					Provide clean legume pasture for sows						
	Utilize pig brooders										
	Prevent nutritional anemia										
		Start to creep feed pigs at 7 to 10 days									
		Castrate at 3-6 weeks									
			Wean pigs at 3 to 8 weeks of age as fits program but not later than 8 weeks								
		Treat for mange at 6-7 weeks									
									Provide adequate shelter from weather		
			Follow vaccination program recommended by veterinarian servicing the herd								
Keep plenty of clean water and mineral mixture available continuously for all hogs											

POULTRY

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Clean brooder house Fill waterers and feeders when chicks arrive. Run brooder 2-3 days before chicks arrive					Provide range shelter		House pullets 20 weeks		Clean brooder house Order egg-production chicks two months prior to delivery		
			Feed growing mash from 8-20 weeks		Begin feeding laying mash at 20 weeks						
Keep house dry					Use lights to provide minimum of 13 hours of light per day beginning at 20-22 weeks						
					Move shelters and feeders						
					Put house and equipment in order. (Spray with approved pesticides)						
		Vaccinate for fowl pox at 8-12 weeks									
		Vaccinate for bronchitis and Newcastle at 4 days, 4 weeks, and 4 months						Check periodically for parasites			
				Keep cool clean water available at all times							
					Store eggs at temperatures less than 60°						
									Summarize laying projects when layers are sold		

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
3 1951 D02 064 717 A

Issued in furtherance of cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Roland H. Abraham, Acting Director of Agricultural Extension Service, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota 55101.

10-67