

Conservation Banquet—

Tells Potential in South Iowa Pasture

Nov. 14, 1963

About 170 Davis countyans, most of them farmers interested in conservation, were told Wednesday night that southern Iowa pasture land could compete with Nebraska's famed Sand Hills in cattle production.

Joe Phillips, Iowa State University extension agronomist, addressed the 19th annual Soil Conservation District banquet here, and explained that although southern Iowa land is more expensive than Nebraska cattle land, it is more productive and can carry more livestock units per acre.

Improved pasture, said Phillips, would be a method of stabilizing farm size, while increasing income potential. He said improved pasture was something to ponder "if you're

worried about this thing of fewer and fewer people on the farm."

"And it doesn't cost you much more taxes on improved pasture than on unimproved pasture," the speaker said, explaining that the increased productivity far outstrips the additional taxes that may incur.

Phillips said that during the past year, the Area Redevelopment Act counties of Appanoose and Monroe have been given pasture improvement incentive in the form of increased government cost-assistance through ACP funds.

He said the program included taking some cropland and putting it into pasture use, as well as pasture improvement. There have been about 14,000 acres of new pasture seeding in the two counties, said Phillips, about half these acres coming under the higher cost-sharing rate.

Now the higher cost-sharing program is being extended to other counties, including Davis. Where such cost assistance used to be 50-50, now the government will pick up 70 per cent of the tab for seed, fertilizer and lime.

Recognizing the need for a transition to pasture and livestock—where land is suited for such an operation—bankers in

to come to longer intermediate type loans, helping good farmers to stock their farms with quality livestock.

Although Phillips foresees higher farm incomes in the next 15-20 years, he drew some gloomy predictions from the crystal ball, too.

One involved replacement of the farmers now on the farm—whose average age indicates they will be retiring in 15-20 years. Currently, he said, the young men aren't working their way into farming. When farm land becomes available, farmers in the 45-50 age bracket are buying it to expand their operations.

Thus the average size farm of the future will take a capital investment of \$130,000 to \$140,000, meaning, said Phillips, that a young man wishing to farm "will have to have a banker friend, marry a rich girl, or inherit something."

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Harold Baughman, a soil district commissioner here, presented awards to five individuals for outstanding work in conservation. The citations went to:

Jacob Birchmier and his son, Eddie; Roy Stookesberry, a Bloomfield city employee who also farms; Mrs. J. Paul Wilcox, who took over the family farm op-

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eration near Drakesville after the death of her husband; and Bob Norberg, editor of the Bloomfield Newspapers, cited for the interest of the local newspapers in conservation work.

In addition, plaques were presented on behalf of the Bloomfield Newspapers to winners in the past summer's annual conservation achievement contest.

Receiving engraved plaques were Mr. and Mrs. E. V. Christy and their son-in-law tenant, Don Walley, winners of the landlord-tenant division; Raymond Howard, winner of the owner-operator division; and Marion Roberts, winner of the division open to new soil district cooperators.

The same winners also received framed citations from the Des Moines Register and Tribune, sponsor of the state-wide conservation contest. Presenting the Register awards was Duane Bennink of Des Moines, assistant director of the State Soil Conservation Committee.

Two of the farms winning on the county level also won regional honors. Making plans to go to Sigourney tonight, where regional awards will be given during the Keokuk county conservation banquet, are Mr. and Mrs. Christy, Walley, and Roberts.

Also participating in the program here were the district's other two commissioners, Clay Barnett, who was emcee, and Sam Botts, Jr., who introduced some of the attenders. County Extension Director William Byers explained the new soil-testing procedures initiated by Iowa State University.