

Charcoal Incentive Seen as Long Range Boost to Land Values

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Clearing wood and brushland for wood sales to a charcoal industry could mean a \$20 per acre increase in a farmer's land value, according to County Extension Director William Byers.

The possibility of a charcoal industry is being discussed in a four-county area including Davis. Farmers supplying suitable wood for such an industry would receive \$3 a ton (\$7.5 a cord) delivered to the charcoal manufacturing site.

Byers said that for the "average farmer," the income from the sale of wood would not

be as significant over a period of years as the increase in the land's value and utility.

Byers said that most of the Davis county timberland suitable for charcoal production probably could not be cleared for cropping purposes, but such areas adapt easily to pasture use.

He said the soil type that is prevalent in these wooded areas (Lindley-Weller) is not too productive, even when such land lies well.

Farmers who cleared woodlands for charcoal could consider these alternatives, Byers said:

- Clear completely or by selective cutting, letting sunlight through which will bring back a natural stand of blue grass for pasture. Trees that are cut should be cut low enough to permit a brush cutter to be used, or stumps can be chemically painted after cutting to kill root systems.

- Or clear and replant to conifers that will produce income for pulp wood, Christmas trees, or the like.

Creating pasture is an inexpensive way to broaden a livestock operation involving dairy cows, beef cattle or sheep, said Byers.

"Many farmers would give their wood to someone who would cut and remove it—if they clean it up properly," said Byers. "And their big reason would be to increase the value of their land."

A charcoal industry, which could bring a farmer \$75 for clearing one acre of well-stocked woodland, could be an incentive for increasing land values and creating pasture.

Although financing a charcoal manufacturing plant is not an inexpensive venture—with some \$100,000 of beginning capital need-

ed—the big question mark seems to be whether enough farmers are willing to commit themselves to supplying cut wood.

Frank Downing, who would set up a pellet-making plant which would buy raw charcoal from the manufacturing plant, said Monday night at Blakesburg that he needs definite assurance that he can obtain the necessary amount of wood before he and his brother will invest in a processing plant.

The matter is still under study.