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DOCUMENTS

Planning and Conducting Field Days and Tours

The value of field days and tours to farmers, ranchmen, homemakers and others interested in agriculture is unquestioned. It is important that these events be organized to stimulate and hold the interest of participants, and at the same time communicate to them the results of research.

Effective field days and tours result only from thorough planning. Some have fallen short of their goal simply because of faulty planning.

They afford an excellent opportunity for groups to obtain and digest information essential to agriculture.

Field days and tours of the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station and Texas Agricultural Extension Service should fall in the following categories:

1. GENERAL FIELD DAYS ON EXPERIMENT STATIONS. To acquaint as many people as possible with the principal research work of the unit, with specific subject-matter stops being handled by research personnel conducting the work or by subject-matter specialists. Visitors go over the field in groups of about 25 under the guidance of county agricultural agents or others trained for the occasion. These groups may walk over a small field unit, or they may travel from

stop to stop by bus, truck or trailer at larger field units. A handout program of events is recommended.

2. SPECIAL FIELD DAYS AND GROUP TOURS. Designed around a special subject as specific commodities, problems or lines of work. Cotton field days, soil conservation days, beef cattle days and tomato field days are examples. The superintendent or person in charge of the work generally handles the visitors and program. *We should have more of this type of field days.*

3. SPECIALIST GROUPS. To inform groups such as extension workers, vocational agriculture instructors, soil conservation technicians, college classes, ASC personnel, FHA workers and business and industry groups so they may have a more thorough understanding of developments to apply to their specialized work. Personnel at field units and the Main Station discuss research studies and their applications. Definite plans and responsibilities should be made.

4. COUNTY OR LOCALITY GROUPS AND VISITORS. Activity varies from one or more casual visitors to a group of 25 or more. These groups usually are handled by the superintendent or research worker immediately concerned, but a plan to handle such visitors should be made. Suc-



Special group field days conducted by one or more Experiment Station staff members or Extension Service specialists serve a good purpose. This type field day or tour should be emphasized.



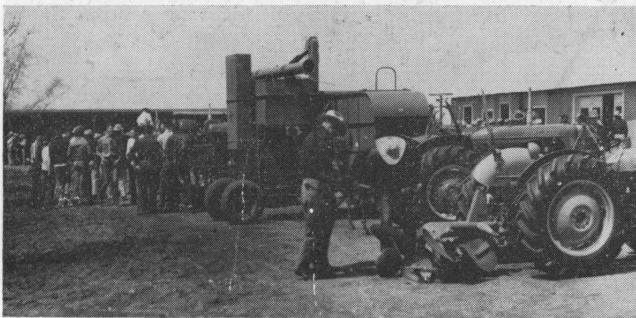
Special exhibits showing contrasts with trained personnel to relate research progress attracts much interest at field days and tours.

Successful meetings of county groups have been held at some field units under the leadership of county agricultural agents, vocational agriculture instructors, SCS workers and FHA supervisors.

THE SUCCESS OF A FIELD DAY DEPENDS ON ADVANCE PLANNING. A committee composed of the field unit superintendent, as chairman, the district agricultural agent and the local county agricultural agent, is responsible for making initial plans for *general field days*, including the type of program, date, advanced publicity, invitations, follow-up publicity, assignment of responsibilities for the program and critique at the end of the field day. Many of the problems arise because dates set have not been cleared with all parties concerned.

Assistance may be requested from the Main Station, the Extension Service, Soil Conservation Service, vocational agriculture instructors, Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Administration, chambers of commerce, farm credit groups, business and industry groups and others who can contribute to a more effective field day.

The participation of Extension Service specialists and county agricultural agents in planning and during field days is encouraged and should be increased.



Displays of farm equipment adapted to the area served by the field unit add to a field day.

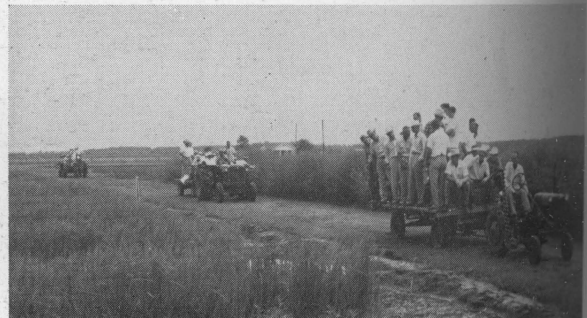
ADVANCE PUBLICITY is important and should be made available through press, radio, television and public announcements as soon as the type of field day and date are set. This will allow representatives of the press, radio and television and others the time to use the advance publicity and to make plans to attend the field day. The Agricultural Information Office can furnish names and addresses of press, radio and television personnel serving the area in which field units are located.

The Agricultural Information Office should have early notice of all field days. It also will prepare releases for regional and statewide distribution if so requested. If the Agricultural Information Office is to prepare and distribute releases, complete information on the field day should be in that office at least two weeks prior to the field day. However, this does not relieve the local committee from responsibility of local publicity.

DISPLAYS of various types such as enlarged photographs, flannel graphs, charts, automatic visual aids and live plants showing contrasts, etc. are valuable additions to field days and attract "extra" interest. Farm machinery displays usually are of interest. The field day committee should determine the extent of displays and designate individuals responsible for them. Ideas and assistance may be obtained from the Agricultural Information Office.

TRAFFIC over the field unit should be well planned to prevent congestion which can destroy much of the effectiveness of a field day. Where many cars are involved in a tour, a specific system should be planned, including the lead car moving far enough past the point of interest to allow the middle car of the caravan to stop at the point of interest. Often when the first car stops at the point of interest the discussion is nearly finished before people from the last car arrive. A controlled parking area for automobiles and tractor-drawn trailers to transport visitors can eliminate most traffic problems.

DISCUSSION LEADERS AND TRAVEL GUIDES can contribute much to the success of a field day or tour by conducting observations and



Tractor-drawn trailers with a tour guide can make a field day much more effective and eliminate many traffic problems.

explanations of work underway. Detailed procedure to meet the various situations should be done by the field day committee, and the discussion leaders and guides should be given adequate advance briefing and training. A "trial or dry run" preceding the field day is advisable, and discussion leaders at each stop should be well qualified to explain what is to be shown or discussed. These may be research leaders, extension specialists, county agricultural or home demonstration agents, vocational agriculture instructors, or specialists from other agricultural agencies. Travel guides should accompany each group to present a running account of overall points of interest on the tour. A hand-type loud speaker is invaluable to tour guides and to discussion leaders at stops.

DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLISHED INFORMATION pertaining to farming and ranching should be provided for field day and tour visitors. Such events provide an excellent opportunity for its distribution. Agricultural groups using published information on research findings in the performance of their duties should be encouraged further. The actual distribution of literature should be well organized and under the supervision of one individual.

For special field days relating to a particular phase of research, it may be desirable to present briefly some of the pertinent data, findings and recommendations. The release of such current information should be decided on by the field day committee.

DEVELOP A PLANNING CHART. Copies should be made available to each state, district, area and county office of the agricultural agencies concerned. An example of such a planning chart is shown in miniature on page 4.

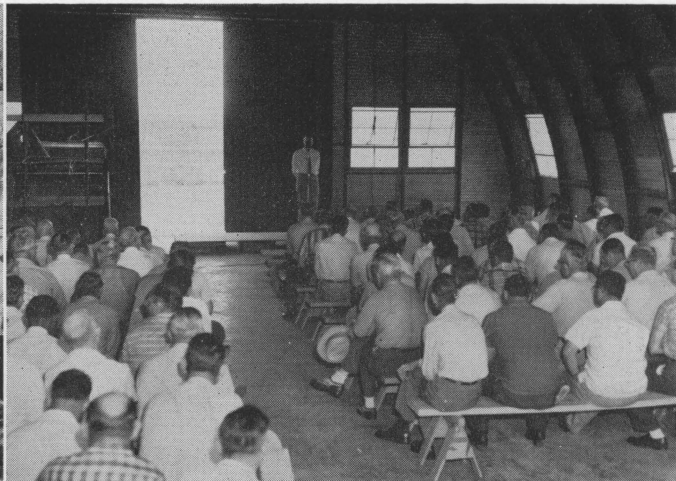
FOLLOW-UP PUBLICITY is important. The local newspapers and radio and television stations should be contacted at the end of the field day if they were not represented, and be given details. A telephone call to farm editors of distant

newspapers and radio and television stations serving the area in which the field unit is located will pay dividends in publicity. Three types of stories result from field days. One is the advance news story telling the date and program, etc. The next story tells what happened for news that night or the next morning. The later feature-type story should be based on one or more important items of research observed and discussed during the field day or tour.

CRITIQUES should be held. After each field day or tour, the committee (the field unit superintendent, the district agent and the local county agent) and possibly others who participated should get together. Notes and experiences should be filed since they are invaluable in future planning.

The following procedure has given good results at group meetings and discussions at large-crowd field days and tours:

1. A good master of ceremonies with a public address system to:
 - (a) Welcome the visitors and make introductions of special visitors, press, radio and television representatives, speakers and *keep the program on schedule*. It may be desirable for the superintendent to make the welcome.
 - (b) Control the crowd during the program, tell of arrangements for lunch, divide the crowd into groups for the tour, etc.
 - (c) Urge people to stay in their groups.
 - (d) Suggest that visitors ask questions during the tour or jot them down for asking during a question and answer session.
 - (e) Point out that no one is to pluck grain, fruit or other specimens since it might affect research data.



Comfort should be afforded field day visitors during assemblies.

(f) Tell where water and rest rooms are located.

2. Formal speaking was kept to a minimum, with topics current, well organized and illustrated—not more than 15 or 20 minutes per speaker—with ample time for questions and answers. A well directed panel discussion was held with questions and answers.

3. Well ventilated, comfortable meeting places were provided and the crowd was kept active.

4. Introduction of “notables” was held to a minimum since most of them prefer to be one of the crowd.

5. Plenty ice water was provided. Commercial companies sometime provide soft drinks.

6. Representatives of the press, radio and television were provided a quiet place to make interviews, and to prepare stories, tape recordings or pictures.

7. The field unit superintendent was kept as free as possible of specific tasks to allow time to greet visitors and check on the progress of the program.

8. The tour guide took over as groups formed, introduced himself, kept his group together and introduced the discussion leader at each stop. The travel guide also pointed out points of interest as the group moved along the route. He kept his group moving on schedule.

9. Stops around the tour were numbered and signs showed what each stop was for. Arrows placed along the route also kept the groups moving in the right direction, and points of interest, other than scheduled stops, were labeled.

10. The “stop” discussion leader had a hand microphone or public address system and stood in prominence either on a bale of hay or platform, and spoke loud enough for the entire group to hear. The speaker stated briefly and clearly the purpose of the experiment, the significant findings to date, the major recommendations coming from the work and related studies.

Graphs, charts and contrasts were helpful in getting points across. The discussion leader referred questions pertaining to other information to the appropriate stop.

11. The time to be spent at each stop was agreed upon in planning the program.

12. A printed or mimeographed program of events was handed out as visitors arrived, and printed or mimeographed material was distributed at a publications booth at headquarters.

13. On general field days, where the program extended into the afternoon, a low cost, wholesome meal was provided by a home demonstration club, 4-H club or FFA chapter, church group, local chamber of commerce or caterer.

PLANNING AND RESPONSIBILITY CHART FOR A FIELD DAY

1. Field Unit
2. Type of Field Day
3. Date Hours.....
4. Field Day Committee
5. Station Tour
- Captain of Stop Discussion Leaders
- Topic Leader
- Topic Leader
- Topic Leader
- Topic Leader
- Captain of Travel Guides
- Guide No. 1
- Guide No. 2
- Guide No. 3
- Guide No. 4
- Guide No. 5
6. Publicity
7. Literature Distribution
8. Display
9. Traffic
10. Food
11. Speakers
12. Loud Speaker Equipment