

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Radio Service

OFFICE OF
INFORMATION

CHATS WITH THE WEATHER MAN

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ANNOUNCEMENT: And here's the Weather Man with another story from those keepers of the weather watch in the U. S. Weather Bureau. Of all the folks who read and hear the daily reports on the weather, no one follows the reports more closely than the farmer. Just how the farmer uses the weather forecasts is the Weather Man's story for today.

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The joke about the weather forecast probably dates back to antiquity. No doubt when Noah was building the ark he heard the original wheeze about forecasters always guessing wrong. As a wise crack it is like the one about the telephone operator getting the wrong number and the mother-in-law gag--the stock in trade of the boys who try to be funny.

Well, such wise cracks are all a part of the life of a forecaster. He takes them with a smile. But here is what a fruit grower in answer to the joker, says about our weather forecasts.

"I grow fruit. My success in fruit growing depends either upon the weather or upon my knowing in advance what sort of weather I may reasonably expect.... I have been warned (by the weather reports)...of dangerous freezes, and have been able, because of that warning, to prevent very serious losses....We have based our plans for irrigating, for the application of fertilizers, for the use of insecticides, very largely on advance information of expected temperatures, and rainfall, frosts and what not."

Many of you read or listen to the daily weather forecasts mostly out of curiosity. Or maybe you like to know whether you will have to carry an umbrella or raincoat with you to the office.

But, that fruit grower ranks the weather report as a necessity. The fruit grower's business hinges on the whims of the sun and rain, and the winds and storms, and the frosts and freezes. A sudden cold snap or windstorm may wipe out his whole season's work. The grower must have advance reports about the weather; he must be prepared.

As I chat with meteorologists at the Weather Bureau, I find that particular fruit grower is only one of millions of men throughout the country who plan their work with the help of the daily forecasts. They also have the aid of special seasonal warnings of various kinds.

I picked up a few examples of how farmers use the weather reports from J. R. Stevens, one of the district forecasters.

Mr. Stevens tells me truck growers and fruit growers are especially interested in the spring frost and cold-wave warnings. If the truck grower hears of a frost

or freeze headed his way, he gets ready to cover his tender vegetables with paper, or cloth, or dirt. The fruit grower starts the smudge pots in his orchard, or runs water into the irrigation ditches, or takes other steps to warm the chilling breath of the frost king.

In the Pacific Coast states alone fruit growers use something around four million heaters in their orchards. They operate these heaters pretty largely on the advices and warnings from the Weather Bureau. A few years ago, the fruit-frost specialists told growers in Southern California an unusually heavy frost would hit them in a day or so. The fruit-frost forecasters cautioned the growers to have extra supplies of fuel oil on hand. The growers got busy and rushed 175 truckloads and 300 carloads of oil into their orange groves. The frost came. The oil heaters saved thousands of dollars' worth of fruit.

Cranberry growers in the northern part of the country take the fall frost warnings as a cue to flood their cranberry bogs. They keep the bogs under water until the weather man says the danger of frost is past.

Thousands of farmers watch the frost warnings to time their fall harvests.

Farmers in the northeastern maple sugar country depend on the spring forecasts to decide when to begin collecting and boiling the maple sugar sap.

Livestock men throughout the country rely on temperature forecasts to plan their butchering and shearing.

Fruit growers in many sections get special fruit spray and harvest weather services. In some parts of the blooming and fruiting season, a disease may attack and damage an apple crop in less than 24 hours if the fruit or blossoms get damp or wet. The apple grower watches the weather forecasts and gives his trees a dose of poisonous spray just before a rain or a long stretch of moist, misty weather.

The Weather Bureau puts out a special forecast on the weather two or three days in advance as a guide to farmers in harvesting their hay, and wheat, and oats, and various other cereal crops. With a little advance warning about a rain, the farmer can prevent a lot of damage to his crops while he is curing the crops and getting them into storage.

In the raisin districts of California, fruit growers keep a close eye on the weather reports while they dry their raisin crop. A little rain will ruin the raisins. When the weather men forecast rain, the growers stack and cover the trays.

Orchardists in the big fruit districts watch the rain forecasts so they can pick their fruit ahead of rains and ship it dry.

Vegetable growers also like to dig their produce before a rain. The vegetables keep much better if they are shipped in a dry condition.

There you have a few examples of how the weather men help the farmer.

But the Weather Man's responsibility doesn't end when the crops and livestock leave the farmer's hands. The Weather Man's warnings protect the produce right on to the market.

For instance, Mr. Stevens tells me if the weather forecasts show a heat wave is on the way, livestock men try to avoid shipping live hogs and cattle long distances by freight.

The railway and transportation companies use the weather forecasts in shipping all kinds of farm produce. If the companies get warning of a cold wave, or a heat wave, they can speed the shipment of the produce, or hold up shipment, or run the cars into roundhouses until the weather is favorable.

In getting those dozen and one warnings and forecasts out to farmers and other folks who handle farm products, the Weather Bureau uses almost every modern method of communication.

The weather men send their news about rain, and snow, and cold snaps, and storms to millions of people through the daily newspapers. They broadcast daily weather forecasts and special warnings and reports over some 300 radio stations. They telegraph weather reports to hundreds of persons throughout the country; these persons in turn pass the reports on to other folks in the community. They send out reports to be posted in postoffices and other public places. In some important farming sections, the Weather Bureau sets up a special weather station during the danger seasons to send weather reports direct to the growers.

And now good-bye until this time two weeks from today when we take a trip with the weather man out to sea.

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ANNOUNCEMENT: Thank you, Mr. Weather Man. That was the Weather Man with a story about the weather from the U. S. Weather Bureau. Station _____ will present the Weather Man in another talk two weeks from today.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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