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A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

By Dr. Charles F. Brooks
of Clark University.

WET GRASS

In the late afternoon several hours before sunset, grass in shady places may begin to get wet. Green growing grass gives off moisture freely. As soon as this water cannot evaporate as fast as it collects, the grass surface becomes damp. Strictly speaking, this first moisture is not dew, because dew is defined as water condensed out of the air.

After the grass has cooled somewhat more, real dew forms. The top of the grass cools first, sometimes a temperature difference of 2 degrees may be noted between the top and bottom of short grass even only ^{one-half} inch high. In deep grass dew may remain throughout the 24 hours without evaporating; it forms at the tip of the blades and runs down keeping the ground surface moist beneath. The heaviest dews occur on clear nights after muggy days. Even over deserts, air contains enough water vapor to form dew. Indeed dew is quite common in deserts, for the clear air allows marked cooling at night. Desert dew is an important source of drinking water for the desert animals, and even for man at times.

(Tomorrow: Clear vs Cloudy Days)

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