

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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" LOOKS LIKE RAIN "

Forecasting rain from local observations alone is a fascinating game for the weather amateur; it is perhaps unkind to tell him that he can hardly hope to average over a 70 per cent. verification by this method and that the experienced forecaster, using both the weather map and local indications or even the map alone is almost certain to beat him in the long run.

Tables of rainfall probability under various conditions have been constructed by Besson in France and by Blair and others on our continent. Blair recently tabulated cases of winter precipitation at Dubuque, Iowa, for a 33-year period with reference to the weather observed 12 or 24 hours previously. In general, it holds true that rain is more likely when the barometer is low than when it is high. The more rapidly the pressure falls the greater is the probability of precipitation. "A rapid fall of the barometer is followed by measurable precipitation in winter less than one-third of the time, but by flurries or traces about two-thirds of the time." East or northeast winds and increasing cloudiness are additional indications of approaching bad weather.

In winter westerly winds are almost always dry although in summer they may bring thundershowers. Fair weather is most certain when the pressure is high and still going up, the sky clear, the wind from a westerly direction and the temperature rising.

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