

Beauty To Share

By Carl S. Hoveland
Agronomy Department, University of Georgia



December, with its Holiday Season, is a time for reflection on the beautiful things in life. One such beautiful thing we enjoy is pastoral scenery of cattle grazing on pastures. Many people, rural and urban, find it particularly restful, peaceful, and satisfying to watch cattle grazing. Artists have been inspired to produce paintings and photographs with pasture scenes as their focus. I have a beautiful old lithograph of a pasture scene at Stratford, England hanging above the fireplace mantel in my home. Musicians have also been motivated by pasture scenes—think of the peaceful “Pastoral Symphony” from Handel’s majestic oratorio “The Messiah” which we enjoy so much during this season of the year.

Certainly, the main reason for pastures is to provide feed for cattle, but they also reduce soil erosion, protect watersheds, provide clean water supplies, absorb and utilize applied waste products, and enhance wildlife populations. Appreciation of forage crop aesthetics, the beauty

of a pasture or hayfield, is seldom mentioned as a value from a cattle farm, but it is often a source of joy and satisfaction to many livestock producers. Many farm homes are sited on hills overlooking a wide sweep of pastureland, giving a beautiful vista for the entire family to enjoy. Farm families are fortunate to enjoy pastoral scenery every day that urban dwellers only dream about or see on vacation trips.

Georgia is a beautiful state with tremendous variety ranging from marshlands and coastal plains to Piedmont hills and rugged forested mountains. The natural beauty of Georgia is enhanced and accented by pasture and haylands. Have you ever thought how the cattle industry contributes to the beauty of our state? As tourists from the Snowbelt of the North drive through our state in winter enroute to Florida, they enjoy the beauty of beef cows and calves on tall fescue pastures in north Georgia and large herds of stocker cattle in the Coastal Plain grazing rye or wheat, the bright green contrasting with

Beef cows and calves grazing crimson clover overseeded on bahiagrass in south Georgia.

the brown of winter-dormant vegetation. During summer, well-fertilized hybrid bermudagrass hayfields in south and central Georgia spread like green carpets on the horizon. In autumn, tourists flock to the mountains to enjoy vistas of brilliant-colored forest leaves. Setting off the colorful trees are beef cattle farms, the pastures made dark green from poultry litter produced in nearby broiler houses. Adding to the beauty of these pastures are cattle of many colors, depending on breed. Small calves in spring frolic together, then find their mothers and nurse in earnest.

Pastures are not entirely green. In northern Georgia, white clover blooms sometimes cover pastures with white dots. Crimson clover in south Georgia can paint the landscape a flaming red. Arrowleaf clover blooms may cover a pasture pink and white while an occasional field of “red” clover gives a splash

of purple. Even weeds add to the beauty although detracting from pasture value—bright yellow bitterweed, rose-colored thistle blooms, and rich red-brown broomsedge in autumn and winter.

The pastoral vistas from interstate highways are nice, but some of the best pastoral scenery in Georgia is found on curving little country roads through pasturelands, delighting the eye. Most of these roads are free of the tiresome ugly billboards that deface the scenery of our main highways. City folks in Georgia and tourists from out of state have discovered the beauty of these tranquil and lovely roads with scenic pastures, neat farm homes, and pleasant small towns.

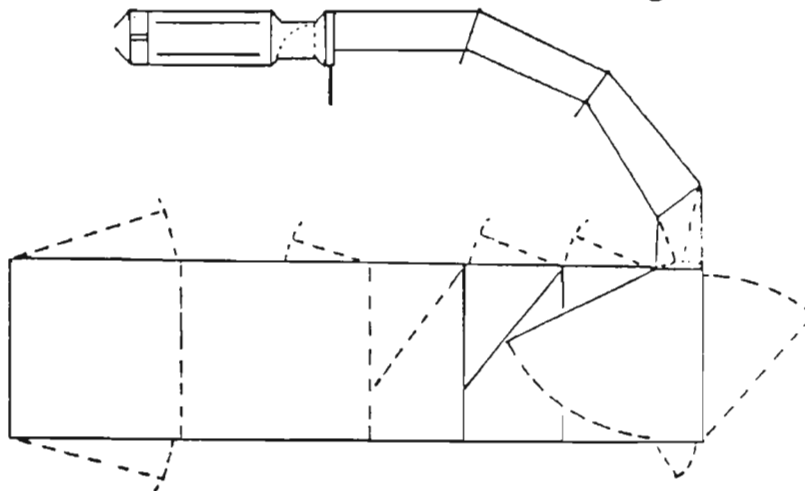
Is there any economic value to all of this? Unknowingly, our cattle industry is contributing to Georgia's tourist potential by beautifying the landscape. Tourism is big business in this state and will get bigger. Tourists will continue to enjoy our grassland scenery. Grassland farmers, Georgia's cattle producers, can take pride in being true environmentalists—preserving our soil and water resources, producing a valuable food commodity, and beautifying the landscape for all to enjoy.



Beef steers grazing rye-ryegrass-arrowleaf clover in the Piedmont area.

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