

THE PROBLEMS OF THE HIGH RAINFALL AREAS

I think the problems which have arisen with one or two notable exceptions are the result of a combination of factors such as:

(1) Relying on undeveloped country to carry stock, (2) Overstocking young pasture, (3) Inadequate drainage and legume loss, (4) Lack of nutrient accumulation, (5) Lack of recognition of the need for a high level of husbandry, (6) Lack of dry matter intake and an excess of parasites both internal and external in the wet season, (7) Marginal and clinical levels of phosphate and copper deficiency, (8) Use of British breeds.

Combine all of these and you have a severe problem. We have discussed all of these to some degree.

As long as beef prices stay at a reasonable level we'll keep our head above water, but won't make a fortune. Present research is being directed to the correct areas and the outlook is encouraging; the research teams should be congratulated.

BOOK REVIEW

The Grasses of Southeast Queensland by J. C. Tothill and J. B. Hacker and published by University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1973.

Though presented by the authors as primarily a compilation, the Grasses of Southeast Queensland constitutes a major contribution to the botanical knowledge of a complex region. In presentation and interpretation, the work can be regarded as a scholarly production with appeal to a wide range of professional disciplines and popular skills related to plant taxonomy.

The bulk of the descriptive matter (Part III) is devoted to detailed descriptions of 104 representative species of the 103 genera recorded for the region. For comparative purposes, the descriptions are helpfully consistent in format and for the benefit of the enlightened layman, taxonomic terminology is restricted to a practical level. A concise glossary is provided for more difficult terms. Following the description of each species is a paragraph containing useful information on ecological distribution, economic value and taxonomic affinities. Conveniently placed on the opposite page is an illustration of the plant, the spikelet and its components. Better usage of the full page by increased magnification of the floral organs would have improved the value of many of the drawings. For those requiring additional information, relevant references to local and recent publications are available. Dichotomous keys are provided for those genera with more than one species in the region and supplemented in large genera with illustrations of the spikelet.

Supporting information is not lacking. Part I of the book classifies the region into six ecological zones containing 13 geographic-vegetation units. These are informatively described and characterized, particularly in relation to the grass flora, and illustrated by photographic plates. Furthermore, a table plots the distribution and frequency of the 343 grasses in the region, so that component native, weed or cultivated species of any unit can be readily ascertained.

Part II comprises a description of the grass plant, a pictorialized key and a detailed dichotomous key to generic level. The descriptive account, supported by stylized illustrations, emphasizes the variation and taxonomic significance of the floral and vegetative organs, and is an invaluable aid to those not familiar with the peculiar characteristics of the grass family. The pictorialized key, based only on features of inflorescence and spikelet, provides a rapid guide to groups of genera, but requires coping with several alternatives. The taxonomic key, like the species' keys in Part III, depends largely on fairly obvious characters and should not be difficult for most readers.

All in all, the data is presented in an orderly, well-balanced manner, richly illustrated and amply annotated with cross-references to literature and illustrations. Notwithstanding the critical need for basic taxonomic works, this book fulfils a very real requirement in applied fields of Australian botanical literature and similar efforts of its standard should be given every encouragement.

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