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MR. I. THOMAS RETIRES

New Deputy-Director Appointed

Mr. Isaac Thomas, Deputy-Director of Agriculture since 1953, relinquished duty with the Department of Agriculture early in December, 1955, upon reaching the retiring age. His retirement closed a successful Departmental career which commenced 42 years previously when he became a member of the staff of the Chapman State Farm.

Mr. Thomas was born at Liverpool, New South Wales in 1891, and worked on the Cowra and Nyngan Experimental Farms in that State. Because of his practical knowledge of the experimental side of wheatgrowing, he was asked to organise cropping programmes in this State at the Chapman State Farm in 1913.

Only 15 months after his appointment to the staff, he was entrusted with the managership of the Chapman State Farm. He enlisted with the A.I.F. in 1916 and was wounded in France in 1917. After his discharge from the Army in 1919, he resumed his managerial duties at Chapman, and in 1924 was appointed Superintendent of Wheat Farms, a title that was later changed to Superintendent of Wheat Farming.

During his 29 years in this position, Mr. Thomas played a leading role in the expansion of the wheatgrowing in this State. His wide practical knowledge and his flair for organisation served him in good stead when new Research Stations came into being and permitted a rapid expansion of the experimental programmes. He played a prominent part in the successful development of the State's light lands which have had such a marked effect upon our production of cereals and wool, especially as this type of soil favoured the extension of subterranean clover pastures to the drier areas.

During World War II, Mr. Thomas was chairman of both the State Wheat Advisory Committee and the Western Australian Barley Board where his long experience of cereal-growing and marketing was of undoubted value.

On November 20, 1953, he succeeded Mr. A. L. McKenzie Clark as Deputy-Director of Agriculture.
During his 42 years of service as an officer of the Department of Agriculture, he became known to thousands of farmers over a wide area of the State, and made many lasting friendships.

Mr. Thomas has been unsparing of self during more than four decades of Departmental service, and a wide section of the West Australian farming community has benefited from his work. His friends in the farming areas throughout the State join with his Departmental colleagues in the fervent hope that he will have many years of health and happiness in which to savour to the fullest extent that satisfaction which comes from a knowledge of good work faithfully performed.

THE NEW DEPUTY-DIRECTOR

It was announced on January 12, that Dr. T. C. Dunne, had been appointed to the position of Deputy-Director of Agriculture, left vacant by the retirement of Mr. I. Thomas.

Dr. Dunne is a West Australian who gained his B.Sc. (Agric.) degree at the University of Western Australia and joined the Department of Agriculture in January, 1926.

Later he obtained his Ph.D. at the University of California and spent several months on grassland studies in Great Britain before returning to Australia.

As Chief Plant Nutrition and Research Officer, Dr. Dunne carried out much valuable experimental work in connection with trace elements and deficiency diseases of plants, and was closely associated with the work at the Esperance Downs Research Station which had paved the way to the successful development of about 2,000,000 acres of coastal light land in the Esperance area.

FOOTROT CAMPAIGN INTENSIFIED

Several outbreaks of footrot which have occurred in Western Australian flocks, are believed to have originated from rams imported from the Eastern States.

A consignment of 40 Southdown rams which reached Fremantle from New South Wales in November were found to be seriously infected and were held in quarantine until freed of the disease by curative treatment.

The Stock Diseases Act regulations have now been amended and consignments of sheep from other States must now be accompanied by a certificate from the Chief Veterinary Officer of the exporting State certifying that:

(a) The sheep show no clinical evidence of footrot.

(b) That they were derived from a flock in which the disease was neither known nor suspected to exist.

SALT LAND RESEARCH

Due to the wide publicity given to Paspalum vaginatum, or Sea-Shore Paspalum, a grass which thrives on salt areas which remain wet throughout the summer months, there has been a greatly increased demand for roots of the plant.

The Department of Agriculture forwarded roots to 156 farmers during September and October, and in addition, it was known that many other farmers had obtained roots from properties where Paspalum vaginatum was already established.

Due to the dry period in June and July, the season has been disappointing for plant germination on salt land. The most promising of the field experiments was at Corrigin where barley germinated in August after being in salt land for six weeks.

Under field conditions, mangels have been shown to be particularly salt-tolerant. Analyses of leaf material have shown salt contents as high as 121%.

Further trials with mangels and fodder beet will be made this year.
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