1-1-1962

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CLOVER LEY FARMING
IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

—An Important Research Project

It is an accepted fact that the pasture period developed as an alternative to cropping in areas where cereals are grown results in increased fertility and a potential for higher cereal crop yields. Two related papers published in this issue report the results of investigations of factors which affect the profitable exploitation of this improved fertility.

In one of the papers Mr. H. Fisher reports on the yields of grain obtained in various crop sequences following pasture leys. It will be seen that monetary returns vary considerably with the choice of cereal grown in any one year and with the sequence in which the various cereals are used for cropping. It is also evident that oat crops can fulfil a very useful purpose in cropping sequences under these conditions.

The second paper by Mr. S. Chambers reports the results of investigations of the incidence of root rots which commonly affect wheat and to a lesser extent barley. These results provide one of the reasons for using oats in the cropping programme as these are resistant to the fungi causing root rots. They also suggest the stages in the cropping period when oat crops are most useful.

One of the important conclusions from these trials is that crop yields obtained with wheat or barley are not necessarily a true measure of soil fertility changes. This results from the evidence that factors other than fertility, such as the root rots mentioned above, can cause reduced yields of both wheat and barley. It would appear that the yields of oat crops are a much more reliable indicator of fertility changes.

Finally it is a pleasure to record appreciation of the financial assistance by the State Wheat Research Committee. Investigations of root rots affecting cereals were commenced by Mr. W. P. Cass Smith some years ago but the additional funds have helped to expedite these investigations as well as other important work associated with the production of cereals.

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Director of Agriculture.