

Madera County foothill ranchers have just finished purchasing cooperatively 11,943 pounds of grass and clover seed. They are now sowing this seed on their control burns that were cleared of brush last summer. The seed was bought on bid by seventeen ranchers and will be used on approximately 1600 acres. This was the number of acres in the 10,333 that were control burned last summer which will not reseed naturally. In other words, every acre that was covered with a good ashy seed bed will be reseeded this fall by the cattlemen of Madera County.

This is real progress. Three years ago when I first came to Madera County range reseeding was still in the "plot stage." Most oldtime ranchers like John O'Neal, Ray Murray, and Jess Bigelow said "Burn the brush and native grass will take over - it is a waste of money to plant all that fancy seed." All this is changed - today these oldtimers are just as proud of our reseeding demonstration plots as I am.

What brought about this change? Several large size demonstration plantings were established in the fall of 1950 on burns of that summer. These plantings totalling over 1,000 acres in the Almahnee community were made at no cost to the ranchers. The Agricultural Extension Office, The University of California Agronomy Department, and the California Fish and Game Commission cooperating, supplied the funds for the seed and the sowing by airplane. The following spring we had something to show them. We conducted several tours, just for ranchers to see these demonstration plots. Up until this tour we had talked about reseeding but had never sold very many on the value and necessity of it. Those tours did. The ranchers became very enthusiastic, they requested that I help them organize and conduct tours for the County Chamber of Commerce and other groups that they wanted to impress.

During the summer of 1951 we had several very successful control brush burns that left large areas of nice white ash - ideal seed beds. The ranchers of the county who had large areas suitable for reseeding, with the aid of the Farm Advisor's Office, formed a seed pool and purchased their seed requirements for 3,600 acres. They also did their seeding cooperatively by airplane. The seed mixture used was recommended by the Farm Advisor. He based his recommendations on the results of over one hundred range variety test plots that had been established in the county through the years. The mixture planted was three pounds of annual rye grass, one pound of Harding grass, one half pound of Smilo grass and one half pound of rose clover, making a total of five pounds of seed per acre. The results of this seeding was again impressive and further convinced the ranchers that reseeding was a good investment.

The recommendations for this year's planting were influenced by the results of the previous year. This year two seed mixtures were suggested - an annual and a perennial mixture. Our foothill range is naturally an annual grass country and probably always will be for the most part. We have come to the conclusion that under the system of grazing practiced and the type of soil we have and our rainfall pattern we cannot successfully establish and maintain perennials and annuals on this same range. This conclusion has led us to suggest that a cattleman who has a range where competition from native annuals will always be great should plant a mixture of five pounds of domestic rye grass and one pound of rose clover to the acre. Then he can graze the area to get the most out of his native annual feed.

On the other hand, ranchers who have ranges that were covered with dense brush and burned with an intense heat leaving a white ash seed bed free of native grass seed should plant a perennial mixture if his soil is keep and fertile he has a very good chance of establishing a stand and maintaining it. Of course, we recommend he fence his perennial range so that he can graze it in such a manner as to get the most feed out of it.

Madera County ranchers seeing the logic of this reasoning are following these recommendations. Eleven of them reseeding are using the annual rye grass mixture to plant 1,800 acres of ash spots scattered over their burns. All of this seeding is being done on foot and horseback. Six ranchers who had large areas suitable for a perennial planting used the following mixture:

Perennial

3 lbs.	Harding Grass
1 lb.	Smilo Grass
1 lb.	Orchard Grass
1 lb.	Domestic Rye Grass
2 lbs.	Common Alfalfa
2 lbs.	Rose Clover
<u>10 lbs.</u>	Per Acre

Cattlemen of Madera County have led the state in the control brush burning program. They are now beginning to realize that getting rid of the brush is only the first step in a three phase program in range improvement. This second phase is to encourage the establishment of grass, either by natural or artificial seeding. The all important third phase is proper range management that will maintain the grass cover in a productive state and prevent the reencroachment of brush. This last phase is one which will require a great deal of work on the part of the Farm Advisor and the ranchers to obtain some of the answers to the problems that now confront us.