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Wm. A. Schoenfeld, Director
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HARVESTING SUBTERRANEAN CLOVER SEED

by

T. H. DeArmond, Superintendent
Red Soils Experimental Area

The possibility of Oregon becoming the producer of a significant amount of subterranean clover seed was revealed when the staff of the Red Soils Experimental Area developed a method for harvesting the 1941 crop on a Clackamas county farm.

The increased use of subterranean clover for pasture in western Oregon, and in grass pasture mixtures, has led to many questions regarding the harvesting of subterranean clover seed.

Subterranean clover promises to be one of western Oregon's major annual legumes for pasture. It reproduces itself year after year by developing seed on or just below the surface of the ground. This clover, unlike most other clovers, grows during the cooler months and furnishes an abundance of feed. There are many distinctly different strains of this annual legume. To date the "Tallarook strain" commonly known as late strain and "Mount Barker" commonly known as the midseason strain are giving the best results on the red soils experimental area.

Seedbed

If subterranean clover is to be grown for seed it is extremely important to prepare a firm level seedbed.

A seedbed of this type insures a better stand of clover and makes possible closer cutting at harvest time. It is almost impossible to cut this seed crop unless the ground is smooth because the seed grows so close to the surface.

Time to Harvest

For best results by this method harvesting should not start until the plants are dead and thoroughly dry. This would be some time during the month of July or first part of August depending upon the season.

Harvesting Equipment

Equipment used successfully in 1941 consisted of a power mower with a lespedeza cutter bar attachment. It is necessary to use lifter guards that fasten over the top of the bar to insure efficient cutting. Lifter guards that

fasten under the bar will not do the job as they allow the cutter bar to ride too high over the ground. A windrower is also used. The lespedeza cutter bar is thinner than the ordinary bar and has about twice as many guards. A tractor is necessary for power as this keeps the sickle speed constant regardless of the traveling speed.

Helpful Suggestions in Cutting
Subterranean Clover

1. Do not cut until clover is thoroughly dry.
2. Tip sickle bar as far forward as possible to insure close cutting.
3. Due to the terrific side draft in cutting this entangled clover, not over a five-foot cutter bar should be used.
4. To prevent clogging and stopping run tractor in low gear. This allows the sickle speed to be greater than the tractor speed.
5. If a five-foot cutter bar is used it is desirable to attach a six-foot swather. This clears a path wide enough for the next cut.
6. For best results thresh with tooth-cylinder type machine because subterranean clover seed is enveloped in a bur type head.