

## A DAY WITH A FARM ADVISOR

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Before we spend this day with a Farm Advisor I think it would be well to be sure we know with whom we're spending a day. I'm sure you know him by name. If it has to do with avocados, it's C. C. Delphay here in Ventura County, G. E. Goodall in Santa Barbara, J. A. Beutel in Los Angeles, J. E. Pehrson in Orange, C. D. Gustafson in San Diego, M. P. Miller in Riverside, R. E. Puffer in San Bernardino, J. H. LaRue in Tulare. But exactly who is he—whom does he work for? He drives a County car, writes on University of California stationery and hands out U.S. Department of Agriculture pamphlets. He sounds as if he were a poor mixed-up kid, but actually there is rhyme and reason to it all.

The Farm Advisor is an academic staff member of the University of California. He is in the Agricultural Extension Service, a part of the Division of Agricultural Sciences. He is hired by the Regents of the University.

Now, where does the USDA fit in? Briefly, it goes back to 1862 when Congress passed the Morrill Act providing for the allocation of certain public lands to the states. Proceeds from the sale of these lands or other revenues from them were to be used to endow and maintain a college for instruction in agriculture and mechanical arts. This was the foundation and start of the Land Grant college system. The University of California was established in 1868 under these provisions as a Land Grant College.

The same year, 1862, Congress provided for the Department of Agriculture, with the purpose of selecting and disseminating knowledge about agriculture and collecting, propagating and distributing useful seeds and plants. Very early in its development, the Department of Agriculture assumed for government the responsibility of agricultural research. The USDA shared that responsibility with the Land Grant colleges through the passage, in 1866, of the Hatch Act. This provided for grant-in-aid funds for research to be expended through the Land Grant colleges.

During the 1890's the feeling grew that the research findings of the Department and the Experiment Stations, and the teaching of the colleges were not reaching the farm and rural homes as well as they should. During the early part of the 1900's several states began extension work under a state-federal agreement. In 1913 a division of Agricultural Extension was created in the College of Agriculture at the University of California, and the first county Extension worker, or Farm Advisor, was placed in Humboldt County.

The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 provided federal funds on a grant-in-aid basis for cooperative work with Land Grant colleges in giving instruction and demonstrations in agriculture and home economics to persons not attending the colleges. The addition of the Extension Service completed the Land Grant college with functions of teaching, research and extension. Part of the funds supporting extension work in the University, then, comes from federal funds through the USDA.

The county comes into the picture because of the early days of the development of Agriculture Extension in California it was felt that county support of Extension personnel was desirable and necessary before the University would assign a man to a county. Today there is a memorandum of agreement between the University and the counties whereby the county provides office space, transportation, secretarial help, supplies and utilities. The University of California provides the Extension worker and pays his salary.

The Farm Advisor, then, is an educator—a teacher—with the whole county he works in as his classroom and the growers and producers residing therein as his pupils. Education is his business. There are no truant officers—no grades—no final exams." It's purely cooperative and voluntary and a grower may avail himself of the service if he wishes.

The basic sources of reference material for the Extension worker—the Farm Advisor—are the research results contributed by the Experiment Stations of the University and the USDA. He extends this information to growers—makes it available to them. This may be done by field demonstrations, through newsletters, by farm calls and the like. He does some applied research. The research on, say, the response of avocados to soil applications of iron was done at the Experiment Station in Riverside. It showed good response there. Will the results be the same here in Ventura County or in Orange County where different soils and climate are involved? Where this question arises, the Farm Advisor must do some applied research in his county, using the basic research as a guide, to find out if the recommendation for this practice can be made to growers in his county.

One other comment before we spend a day with the Farm Advisor. In most counties of the state there are several Farm Advisors, each a specialist in his field. This specialization has become necessary because of the complexity of our agriculture today. By specializing, a Farm Advisor is better able to keep up with and bring you the latest information pertaining to the crop you grow.

Now, let's start out on this day we're going to spend with a Farm Advisor. The first stop is at the office where the mail is gone over and letters answered. Among the letters is a request for information on how to topwork avocado trees. The University circular on "Avocado Propagation" is mailed to this grower, as it contains information and illustration on topworking. Another letter asks how can it be determined if avocado trees have root rot—the writer thinks his trees do—can the Farm Advisor please come and look at them? In answer, it is suggested that a test for rot be made by a laboratory and a date is set when the Farm Advisor will make a farm call to look at the trees.

A few minutes are spent proofing the monthly Avocado Newsletter which was written yesterday. This will go out to all avocado growers in the county. This issue is on soil moisture and the use of tensiometers in avocado irrigation.

Before we get away the phone rings and the Farm Advisor is asked if he will talk at a Service Club meeting a week from Tuesday. They'd like a talk on the avocado industry of the county. The date book is consulted—the day is free for the lunch meeting—he accepts.

Now, to get out before the phone rings again—we've a farm call to make and we can just get there on time. The first call is at an orchard where the owner has been puzzled by a leaf pattern on his trees. He asked the Farm Advisor to come out and look at it. We meet the owner, and he takes us out in the orchard where the pattern occurs. The Farm Advisor diagnoses it as a pattern and burn caused by excess chloride accumulation in the leaves and suggests a change in frequency and amount of irrigation. He has this information on corrective measures because of field trials he has run for several years in other orchards. The next farm call is on the property of a new owner who is getting ready to plant his trees and wanted suggestions on which varieties to plant and where to plant them. The property is looked over, some soil cores are examined to determine soil type and drainage, and the recommendations on varieties and location are made.

Today is the day the Farm Advisor has scheduled to evaluate one of his avocado variety plots so this is our next stop. This plot consists of several varieties which are untried in the area. The Farm Advisor established this plot in cooperation with the owner and obtained the grafts of the different varieties. Growth habits of the trees are observed and noted, as is production. A fruit sample of each variety which is mature is taken for further evaluation when it ripens. Results of these tests will be made available to growers as reliable data are obtained.

The next stop is another farm call where the owner is concerned about the sudden death of his trees. No cause is readily apparent and, believe it or not, the Farm Advisor is stumped. But here he has the research facilities of the University behind him and he assures the grower that he will have the research people look into the matter to try and determine the cause of the trouble.

Now we go to an appointment with two research men from the Citrus Experiment Station. They want to establish a field experiment to determine the optimum level of N fertilization for two avocado varieties. They had asked the Farm Advisor if he would be willing to cooperate in finding suitable locations and in helping gather yield data. The Farm Advisor was glad to do so as this meant more on-the-spot information for his county. We meet the research men and look at several alternate locations the Farm Advisor has picked out. Two are selected and arrangements are made to establish the plots.

This about winds up the day—before dinner, that is. In the evening we go to the 3rd meeting of a 6 session weekly avocado school arranged and put on by the Farm Advisor. For this meeting he is leading a discussion on weed control in avocado orchards and has asked the Extension Specialist in Weed Control from Riverside to assist him.

Tomorrow—a training conference at the Experiment Station with other avocado farm advisors—to be brought up-to-date on the most recent results in avocado root rot research.

The next day—conducting a tour of growers to plots in the county to demonstrate methods of sprinkler irrigation.

A day with a Farm Advisor is varied and very few days are the same. His basic job is education—keeping you informed of the latest information and methods for better and more economical production of your crop. He is your contact with the University in your county. Your interests are his interests when it comes to growing avocados. Get to know him—he's a good person to know.