



PERSPECTIVE . . .

Prescription Entomology

GEORGE C. DECKER, Entomologist, Illinois Agricultural Experiment Station

THE ACQUISITION of a vast fund of knowledge and technical know-how that is not put to productive use seems wasteful and absurd, and yet it is doubtful that we are 50% efficient in the use of knowledge already acquired. Most county agents will tell you that a large percentage of their most perplexing calls for assistance have to do with insect problems, and yet very few of these men have any fundamental training in entomology. Many states have but one extension entomologist on their staff and a few have none. This situation is badly in need of correction.

We cannot expect farmers and laymen in general to acquire and apply an adequate knowledge of insects and insect control measures when suitable educational facilities are lacking. If land grant college administrators can justify the employment of several specialists in such restricted fields as agronomy, horticulture, livestock production, and home economics, we must increase our effort to convince them that one man cannot adequately cover a subject as complex as entomology which has ramifications in every field of production and every walk of life. . .

Entomologists find it increasingly difficult to prepare circulars and other types of literature that will adequately serve the farmer's needs. With a large array of available insecticides having specific

and unique characteristics and highly variable field conditions to be met, we are rapidly approaching what has been termed the day of prescription entomology. Large cotton plantations, canning companies, and land management agencies, in recognition of this trend, now employ trained entomologists to check crops and recommend appropriate specific control measures or even supervise their application.

Perhaps in the not too distant future trained entomologists will hang up shingles in strategic locations and begin the practice of entomology on a basis comparable to veterinary medicine. Still others with training in entomology and plant pathology will establish successful agricultural chemicals stores and accomplish much the same objective by providing sound technical advice with each sale, thus rendering a service in a sense comparable to that provided by a reputable pharmacist. How rapidly this movement will develop remains to be seen, but our colleges and universities should without further delay develop curricula that will adequately prepare students for entry into these fields. (*Excerpted from the presidential address before the Entomological Society of America, Cincinnati, Ohio, Nov. 28, 1955*)