



## Drain the wet spots. Circular 77 May, 1917

Jones, E. R. (Edward Richard), 1882-1937

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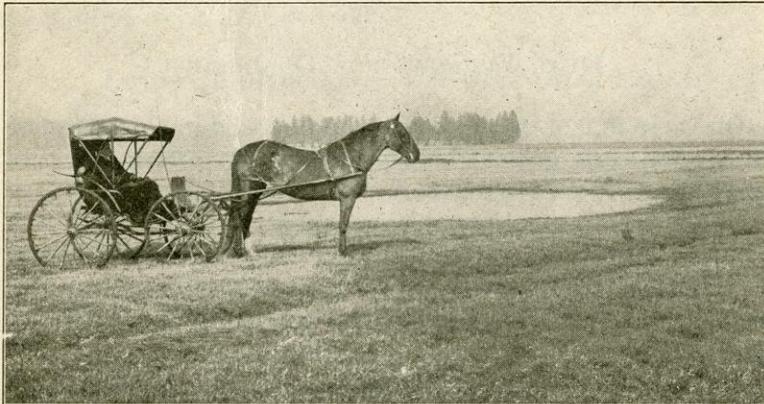
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Circular 77

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# Drain the Wet Spots



“SOMEWHERE IN WISCONSIN”

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on part of the field.

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# Drain the Wet Spots

E. R. JONES, Secretary Wisconsin State Drainage Association

The most unprofitable part of the farm is the wet spot in the cultivated field. The spot is just dry enough to tempt one to plow it, but is just wet enough to ruin all or a part of the crop.

A ditch made by a few minutes' work with a plow often saves the crop and increases the profit.

## DEAD FURROWS FOR DRAINAGE

One acre out of every ten in clay areas is in the wet spot class. With the present high prices, can we afford to waste labor and seed on ten acres and harvest only nine?

Quick drainage counts this spring. It is too late to save much of this year's crop by tiling. But surface drainage can be improved by making use of the dead furrows where the water is apt to stand and by lowering obstructing culverts. Don't let a day's rain ruin the season's crop.

Tile will save next year's crop and make a permanent job of it. Why not plan now for the tiling you expect to do next summer or fall but **do** the surface draining **now**?

**Let's give the dead furrows an outlet. A dead furrow without an outlet is only a reservoir. The water in it is like a man all dressed up with no place to go.**

## ONE HOUR'S TIME SAVES CROP

Recently I spent two days in Jefferson county carrying the gospel of quick drainage from farm to farm. I noticed water standing in three dead furrows about four rods apart on an acre of excellent flat clay land that had been seeded to oats. It was dry when seeded, but a rain had flooded it. I found the farmer who had put in the crop, and with my instrument convinced him that we could give the dead furrows an outlet.

"Some day," he said, "I'll take a plow and plow a furrow across the ends of these dead furrows to let the water get away."

But the time to do such work is **now**.

In five minutes we had a team unhitched from a manure wagon and hitched to a plow. We plowed the furrow where it would do the most good—plowing twice where it crossed a little ridge. The water followed us so fast that we had to walk to the side of the furrow to keep our feet dry. In half an hour, all of the furrows were empty. We trimmed the side of the furrow with a spade so that it could be crossed easily with a binder. It did not take an hour to do the whole job, and it may save a crop on an acre of land. This is an example of what can be done.

#### **Lower the Culverts—Let the Water Run**

In Dane county a dead furrow on a flat spot in a seeded oat field did not connect with the 18-inch corrugated culvert in the road, and the culvert was too high to do any good if it did connect. The farmer was digging a pit for a silo. He had his carpenter's level handy, so for simplicity we used his instrument instead of mine. He convinced himself that he could get rid of the water by lowering the culvert. With two spades and a pick-axe we went to work and in an hour had the culvert lowered one foot. We cut a trench back to the dead furrow and before night its bottom was dusty.

#### **Make Surface-Runs**

North-central Wisconsin fairly shines after a rain with forty-acre fields of flat land that have no ravine into which dead furrows can discharge their water. Here it is necessary to take a light road grader or a V-shaped ditcher and make a well-sloped surface-run into which the dead furrows can empty. O. R. Zeasmán, of the Soils Department, spent two weeks this spring in Clark and adjoining counties showing how to make these surface-runs. In one case he had to make a run 130 rods long to reach a ravine, but in that distance it furnished an outlet to 65 dead furrows. With a V-shaped ditcher and a man and team to help him, he completed the 130 rods in about two hours. A spade put the finishing touches on the outlets of the furrows.

## How to Make Dead Furrows Work

Land that was plowed last fall may have its dead furrows poorly located. In such cases, don't make a bad job worse by filling them up. Make a surface-run to help them as much as possible.

Next fall, when you plow, if you have not had time to tile your land, plan your dead furrows for drainage.

### A Few Drainage Suggestions

1. Have your dead furrows extend in the line of greatest slope on the flatter lands.
2. Plow in narrow lands not over 4 rods wide so that there will be a dead furrow or a back furrow every 2 rods.
3. Plow twice in the dead furrow where it crosses a ridge. In long level furrows, plow twice near the outlet to create a fall toward the surface-run.
4. Use a light road grader or a V-shaped ditcher to make the surface-run into which the dead furrows can discharge.
5. Cut a trench through the sod to the fence to connect the dead furrow with the road ditch or surface-run outside the fence. Don't dam the dead furrows.
6. Clean out the dead furrows after seeding or planting. Use a spade or hoe, or smash the lumps by dragging a log down the furrow.
7. Have corn rows extend in the same direction as the dead furrows so that they will not be filled up by cultivation.
8. Slope your dead furrows in fields of small grain so that you can cross them with a binder without jolting.
9. Keep an eye open for the wet spots on which water stands after each rain, and fix up the dead furrows before the next rain.
10. Get busy with a spade or a hoe as soon as it stops raining. Every spadeful of earth means a shovelfull of corn.