TECHNICAL NOTES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

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THE USE OF AGRICULTURAL GYPSUM IN CLEARING MUDDY PONDS[1/]

"There is a new and economical way to keep your pond water clear for livestock, swimming or fishing -- add agricultural gypsum to the pond.

"Gypsum causes the clay or silt particles suspended in the water to come together and settle to the bottom, leaving the water above clear.

"In University of Missouri tests, gypsum was added to a pond so muddy that a man's submerged fingers could not be seen through the water. After treatment with gypsum, the pond became so clear that objects could be seen two to three feet below the surface.

"Treatment with gypsum often keeps water clear for several years, unless an excessive amount of clay washes into the pond or livestock stir up clay from the pond bottom. It is harmless to fish and marine life in the pond, and in the quantities recommended does not substantially alter the hardness of the water."[2/]

To determine how much gypsum is needed, determine the acre-feet in the pond by multiplying the surface acres in the pond by one-third of the maximum depth of the pond in feet. Apply the agricultural gypsum at a rate of 400 pounds per acre-foot of water in the pond. On small ponds, gypsum may be thrown over the surface of the water with a shovel from the shore; on larger ponds it is desirable to spread the gypsum from a boat.

The range conservationist at Springerville recently tried the method. A stock tank on the Bud Greer Milky ranch in Apache County was used for the test. The tanks in this country obtain water from the Chinle badlands, and the water is generally too thick to drink and too thin to plow. The tank was estimated at 48,000 c.f. The range conservationist applied 500 pounds of gypsum from the bank with a shovel. The application was made on June 11 at about 5:00 P.M. The tank was inspected again on June 13 and 19 -- cattle were watering. The water was clear and it had no gypsum taste.

1/ Put out as a Technical Note by Arizona, Idaho and Washington.

2/ Quoted from an anonymous article appearing in the March 1958 issue of "County Agent Magazine."