

INTRODUCTION

That livestock must play a bigger part in the agriculture of the British West Indies is now realized (Stockdale 1940-2). It is a realization based on the urgent need for improved human nutrition and soil conservation and entails a change from the single crop agriculture and shifting cultivation of the past.

The most conspicuous method for the improvement of tropical livestock has been the importing of sires of European breeds. There is a danger however, of breeding for production beyond the natural ability of the country to supply the necessary high grade feed (Hammond, 1932). Whilst in Jamaica, the writer observed that there was a definite inverse correlation between the 'kindness' of the general management and the emphasis of the pen-keepers on the percentage of Indicus blood (Zebu) in their cattle. At the Government Stock Farm where conditions were excellent, pedigree Jersey's were regarded as quite suitable. Elsewhere at least one quarter Indicus blood was insisted upon.

One aspect of the environment, amenable to improvement in the tropics, is the quality of the pastures and fodders. Generally speaking, throughout the tropics these are lower in quality than temperate leys (Paterson, 1944).