Weather or Not

Joan Redman
Iowa State College

Follow this and additional works at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker

Part of the Home Economics Commons

Recommended Citation
Redman, Joan (1954) "Weather or Not," The Iowa Homemaker: Vol. 34 : No. 4 , Article 2.
Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol34/iss4/2

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Publications at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Homemaker by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
EVERYBODY'S talking about it — the weather! Or so it seems in much of our conversation today. But delve into history and you'll find generations of our ancestors did the same thing. And some of their myths have scientific basis.

In earliest civilizations men watched for the changing seasons and learned that it was time for planting crops after the snow had left the ground. Gradually man's knowledge grew and calendars and almanacs came into being.

Indian Gods
To the American Indian, weather meant much more than a good conversational topic. He danced to the rain and sun gods and developed legends about the four winds and other weather peculiarities. Indian blankets and pottery show cloud designs as accurate as a trained meteorologist could devise today.

Most of us have heard some version of the old sailor's rhyme: "Red sky in the morning, Sailors take warning. Red sky at night, Sailor's delight."

You may be surprised to find an almost identical idea in Matthew 16. Christ said, "When it is evening, ye say, 'It will be fair weather,' for the sky is red. And in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today,' for the sky is red and lowering."

This phenomena is explained in this way by science. In most places, weather patterns tend to flow from west to east. If tomorrow's weather lies westward as a mass of dry dust, the sun appears at its reddest. On the other hand, if the sun is red in the morning, the dryness has passed eastward, and the stormy weather is yet coming from the west.

Groundhog Day
One American weather superstition has almost become a tradition: Groundhog Day. The story says that if the groundhog sees his shadow when he emerges from his hibernation on Feb. 2, 6 more weeks of winter remain. If he does not see his shadow, winter is over. Science places little faith in this legend since most groundhogs wait until the first of March to emerge.

Also sun on one day can't predict weather for the next 6 weeks, scientists say.

Animal forecasters
On the other hand, some animals prove to be top weather forecasters—legend-wise and according to science, too. The wooly bear caterpillar found in the Eastern mountains figures in a colonial legend. These early citizens said if the brown band found around the caterpillar's middle is narrow, winter will be severe. If it is wide, there will be a warm winter. New York's Museum of Natural History started recording yearly data in 1947. The caterpillar had a narrow band that year—the winter New York had its worst recorded snow storm in 76 years. Work has continued since then, and to date, the caterpillar has not been wrong.

Scientific truth

Fact or fantasy—truth or tale? Whether predicting by scientific data or myth, you can't tell about the weather. And who knows, your superstition may contain scientific truth.