

Revision Notes
Chapter – 9
Life in the Temperate Grasslands

Grassland is a region where grasses form the dominant type of plant life.

As climate plays an important role in the formation of grasslands, it is generally used as a basis to divide the world's grasslands into two broad categories: those that occur in the temperate regions and those that occur in the tropical regions.

The Prairies:

- (i) The temperate grasslands of North-America are known as the **Prairies**.
- (ii) For the most part, Prairies are tree-less but, near the low-lying areas woodlands can be found. The prairies are bound by the Rocky Mountains in the West and the Great Lakes in the East.
- (iii) Prairies cover major parts of USA and Canada. In the USA, the area is drained by the tributaries of Mississippi and the Canadian prairies are drained by the tributaries of Saskatchewan Rivers.

Climate:

- (i) Climate is of continental type with extreme temperature.
- (ii) The annual rainfall is moderate and is ideal for the growth of grass.
- (iii) The summers are warm with temperatures of around 20 C, while in winter -20 C has been recorded in Winnipeg, Canada. In winters, a thick blanket of snow covers this region. The annual rainfall is moderate and is ideal for the growth of grass. Due to the absence of the north-south barrier, a local wind "Chinook" blows here.

Flora and Fauna:

- (i) Prairies are practically tree-less but the places where water is available, trees such as

willows, alders and poplars grow. Tall grass, upto two metres high, dominates the landscape. It is actually a “sea of grass.”

(ii) Places that receive rainfall of over 50 cm, are suitable for farming as the soil is fertile.

(iii) Large-scale cattle farms called ranches are looked after by the sturdy men called cowboys.

(iv) Bison or the American buffalo is the most important animal. The other animals found in this region are rabbits, coyotes, gophers and Prairie dogs.

People:

(i) The people of this region are very hardworking. They have successfully harnessed technology to utilise their rich natural resources.

(ii) Two of the most developed countries in the world - USA and Canada are located in this region.

(iii) Scientific methods of cultivation and use of tractors, harvesters and combines has made North America a surplus food producer. The Prairies are also known as the “Granaries of the world,” due to the huge surplus of wheat production.

(iv) Dairy farming is another major industry. The dairy belt extends from the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Coast in the east. Dairy farming and extensive agriculture both promote setting up of food processing industries.

(v) Large mineral deposits particularly coal and iron and a good network of roads, railways and canals in this region have made it the most industrialized region in the world.

The Velds:

(i) The temperate grasslands of South Africa are called the velds.

(ii) Velds are rolling plateaus with varying heights ranging from 600 m to 1100 m.

(iii) They are bound by the Drakensburg Mountains on the east. To its west, lies the Kalahari desert. On the northeastern part, “high velds” are located that attain a height of more than 1600 m, in some places.

·Climate:

- (i) The velds have a mild climate due to the influence of the Indian Oceans.
- (ii) Winters are cold and dry. Temperature varies between 5 degrees Celsius and 10 degrees Celsius, and July is the coldest month.
- (iii) The velds receive rainfall mainly in the summer months from November to February. This is mainly because of the warm ocean currents that wash the shores of the velds. If the rainfall is scanty in the winter months from June till August, drought may occur.

Flora and Fauna:

- (i) Vegetation cover is sparse.
- (ii) Red grass grows in bush velds.
- (iii) In the high velds, acacia and maroola are seen to be growing.
- (iv) The animals of the velds are primarily lions, leopards, cheetah and kudu

People:

- (i) Velds are known for cattle rearing and mining.
- (ii) The main crops are maize, wheat, barley, oats and potatoes. Cash crops like tobacco, sugarcane and cotton are also grown.
- (iii) Sheep rearing is the most important occupation of the people. Sheep is bred mainly for wool and has given rise to the wool industry in the velds. Merino sheep is a popular species and their wool is very warm.
- (iv) Dairy farming is the next important occupation. Cattle are reared in the warmer and wetter regions and the dairy products like butter, cheese are produced for both domestic supply and also for export.
- (v) The velds have rich reserve of minerals. Iron and steel industry has developed where coal and iron are present. Gold and diamond mining are major occupations of people of this region.
- (vi) Johannesburg is known as the gold capital of the world. Kimberley is known for its diamond mines.