

Farmer's Advocate and Home Journal

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Vol. XLV.

Winnipeg, Canada, June 16, 1909

No. 873

FARMER'S ADVOCATE AND HOME JOURNAL

ESTABLISHED 1866.

Canada's Foremost Agricultural Journal
Published Every Wednesday.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

Canada and Great Britain, per annum, in advance \$1.50
" " " " " (if in arrears) 2.00
United States and Foreign countries, in advance 2.50
Date on label shows time subscription expires.

In accordance with the law, the FARMER'S ADVOCATE is sent to all subscribers until an explicit order is received for its discontinuance, accompanied by payment of all arrearages.

British Agency, W. W. Chapman, Mowbray House, Norfolk St., London, W. C. England.

Specimen copies mailed free. Agents wanted.

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FARMER'S ADVOCATE

OF WINNIPEG, LIMITED

14-16 PRINCESS STREET

WINNIPEG, MAN.

EDITORIAL

The One Great Object

If there is one time more than another when the homesteader and new settler needs to devote himself undividedly to one object it is during the month of June. The particular object of his attention should be "breaking." Upon the amount of prairie he gets turned over depends his comfort and prosperity for years to come. It is the more necessary that a man apply himself with more than ordinary persistence to this work for the reason that the number and variety of interruptions that present themselves almost suggest a diabolical influence. It seems that it is impossible that there could be further interruptions than some most plausible cause for a day off will arise. There will be fencing, building, road making, opportunity to make some money at other work and other legitimate reasons for putting off breaking, but it is remarkable the number of opportunities there will be to get other work done after the breaking is finished for the season.

Average Yields and Prices

Crop experts are busy with their pencils these days preparing to tell the public how much wheat has been sown, what it should yield and what the price should be. Crop reports have a tendency to steady trade just as a bridge builder will make a point on the up stream side of a pier to relieve it of the full shock of the current. Crop reports of prospective yields are based upon the law of averages. Over a period of years yields from a given number of acres have been found to be so much, therefore, the yield for this year should be so much. If the actual yield should go a few million bushels either way from the estimate the price is affected very little; it's the estimated yield that makes the basis of prices.

This fact suggests an opportunity for farmers to profit by experiences and estimates. It should be possible to raise a great deal more wheat than the estimate based upon averages. We have the latest thing in machinery for cultivation, seeding, harvesting and threshing, and our plant breeders and selectors are offering heavier yielding varieties all the time. Isn't it within the range of possibilities to beat the average and so have more wheat to sell after the trade has imagined it had it all? In a small way this is being done by individual farmers and the practice offers unlimited scope for expansion.

The Truth About Pastures

An idea persists in many quarters that pasture is a cheap feed, which costs next to nothing, and is necessary for the economical production of milk, meat or wool. Many farmers still consider themselves justified if they can carry their stock over winter without much or any increase in weight or yield of milk, just so that they may have it to make profit from in the halcyon days of summer pasture. This view is responsible for what, in the aggregate, bulks up into one of the most enormous losses of the farming business. As a direct result of it millions of animals are maintained at a dead loss for six or seven months of the year, and at but a meagre profit during the remaining five or six.

Pasture is about the least productive crop we raise. That is to say, an acre under pasture, grazed by stock, will furnish less sustenance for the human race than an equal area under any other crop. It is a very exceptional acre of Canadian pasture that will, without supplementary feeding, sustain an ordinary cow three months. More often it requires two acres. In the good old ranch days it was put at twenty acres for the summer. But suppose the case of a rich, well-seeded, well-manured, permanent pasture, on fertile soil, and assume that one acre of such land would graze a cow abundantly for three months. Now, put that land under alfalfa, and corn, roots, some clover and mixed grain, grown in rotation. If well cultivated, and regularly enriched by the manure from the feeding of previous years' produce, such a field will come very close to turning off enough feed and bedding to sustain the same cow a twelve-month. The celebrated Pennsylvania dairyman, Mr. Dietrich, succeeded, on a small lot, in keeping considerably over a cow to the acre, by housing his cattle all the year round, and practicing a soil system. What is more, he made it pay. Of course, this was intensive dairying; he was producing a high-priced product (milk for Philadelphia trade) on high-priced land, and had to utilize the full producing capacity of every acre of land. It would not be advisable for many Canadian farmers to follow his method in full, but they carry a potent suggestion.

The Hog Question

Eastern farmers seem to be drifting out of the hog business and despite the coaxing of the packers and the freely tendered advice of agricultural authorities, it would seem as if the number of hogs on Ontario farms will continue further to decrease. A commission is appointed to go over to Britain and Denmark and make exhaustive investigations over there, in the endeavor to find out what ails the industry in Ontario.

The hog raising end of the bacon industry in Ontario is in the same condition, practically, as it is out here. The market for hogs is not large enough. We have accustomed ourselves to thinking of the British market for bacon as one that we could never hope of over supplying, but it seems to follow always, that just as soon as the number of hogs increases in any appreciable degree, over supply or something, pounds down hog values until it is not worth anyone's while remaining in the business. Down in Ontario, too, the doctrine of the bacon type was more successfully preached than here, but farmers found that buyers did not care half as much about the type of the hogs they were buying as they did about the price they could get them for. That was the trouble, so far as type went, in the east as well as here. Those who were preaching the doctrine of the bacon type were too far away from the men who raised the hogs, to apply their preachings practically. It has always been difficult to understand just why hog prices should fluctuate within such wide limits as they do in this country. The matter has been explained often enough it is true, and those offering the explanations seemed generally to be pretty well convinced themselves on the points concerned, but the trouble was that conviction was not contagious, and the average man, after he had listened to lengthy explanations of the operations of the law of supply and demand, was unlikely to be any nearer comprehension of the real cause of the disruption in prices, due to his neighbor and he each raising ten hogs more this year than they did last, than he was before the attempt was made to instruct him in one of the principles of economics.

A commission sent to the Old World to inquire into hog raising and pork packing there may not do any harm, and a jaunt over at the public expense would certainly be pleasant to those selected for the inquiry, but it seems to us that the crux of the situation is right here in our own country, and whether in Ontario or in the West, an understanding between the interests, now somewhat estranged, would bring about a healthier condition in hog raising and the bacon industry, that any amount of investigation or inquiry in Europe ever will.