

GOVERNMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF SASKATCHEWAN
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

ALFALFA SEED PRODUCTION

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Alfalfa seed is retailing this year at from 20c to over \$1.00 per pound. The price of the hardest varieties varies from 40c to \$1.00 and these are the only ones that should enter into general use in Saskatchewan.

It is apparent that when sown at the usual rate, and in the ordinary manner, that the cost of seed is in itself sufficient to prevent many men from growing the crop. Eight or ten pounds per acre at 60c per pound is too much money to put into even alfalfa, particularly in the dry parts of the province where the yield of forage is often very light. When the price of seed is reduced to 20c per pound one great objection to the growing of the crop will be removed. Even at this figure alfalfa seed production should prove a profitable undertaking.

Under these circumstances it would appear that the next step in the propaganda for more alfalfa should be the encouragement of seed production. If cheaper seed of our hardest varieties were available there is no doubt that more alfalfa would be sown. Until seed is available at a reasonable price the cost of putting down land to alfalfa will continue to be a serious obstacle in the way of alfalfa production.

POSSIBILITIES OF SEED PRODUCTION

In the year 1912 a yield of 300 pounds of Grimm's Alfalfa per acre was reported from a farm in southern Alberta; in 1913 on the same farm the yield was 150 pounds, and in 1914 about 40 pounds per acre. In 1912 a yield of 90 pounds was reported from Avonlea and in 1914 an equal amount was produced at Maymont, Sask. At Neepawa, in Manitoba, in 1914 an 8-acre field produced at the rate of 300 pounds per acre of Grimm's Alfalfa.

On the University Farm at Saskatoon no alfalfa was grown in rows for seed until the year 1914. Under field conditions, in the year 1911, abundance of seed formed, but none ripened; in 1912 Grimm's Alfalfa yielded at the rate of 100 pounds per acre; in 1913 at the rate of 50 pounds per acre, and in the dry year of 1914 the yield ranged from 20 pounds to 116 pounds per acre according to the cultural treatment given.

The nature of the alfalfa plant is such that, if at the time the plants are coming into bloom, or even if already in bloom, rains occur, new shoots very soon occur at the base of the plants and seed formation stops. For this reason very little alfalfa seed can be grown in humid countries, and for the same reason it would seem that the drier parts of our own province should be well suited to seed production.

It has already been observed that the crop does not ripen seeds in the north as well as in the south and west where the dry winds and higher temperatures are more prevalent. From these observations it would seem that the warmer soil types in southern and west central Saskatchewan, the production of alfalfa seed should prove a very paying proposition.

SUITABLE VARIETIES FOR SEED

No figures on the relative value of different varieties for seed purposes are available. It has, however, been observed on the plots at the University that Grimm and other variegated sorts seem to get seed much more freely than any of the common varieties. Similar observations have been made at different places in the northern prairie States. All information that has been gathered seems to point to the one