

Pointers for Alfalfa Growers

Hy. Glendinning, Ontario Co., Ont.

The new seeding of alfalfa has taken exceptionally well this year. The "catch" has been better than either red or alsike clover on similar land. This is probably due to the fact that the roots of the alfalfa penetrate more deeply into the soil than in the case of other clovers. F. D. Coburn in "The Book of Alfalfa," mentions that Prof. W. P. Headland, of Colorado, found roots nine feet long from alfalfa only nine months old. Another writer reports alfalfa roots as being 17 inches long on plants of but four weeks growth and the plants being but six inches high.

Two fine crops of alfalfa have already been secured this season. It is making rapid progress towards a third cutting. More alfalfa hay was cut this summer in Canada than ever before. Many cut it for the first time. Some may have not had yields equal to what they have been led to believe was an average crop. These people must bear in mind that it is not until the third year that one can cut a full crop.

Notwithstanding all advice given regarding not to pasture the alfalfa fields, we find new beginners having secured a fine catch, turning their stock upon the fields, as the plants have made such a rapid growth. When remonstrated with they will say, "Why it is making such a rapid growth and so much feed is going to waste that I don't think it will hurt to pasture it."

They should bear in mind that they are new at the business. The rapid growth that the plants are making during the warm weather will not continue when it becomes cold and when the days become shorter. It is safe to say that 90 per cent. of all the failures in growing alfalfa come from pasturing it.

A Question of Importance

A. C. Hollman, Waterloo Co., Ont.

The August 5th issue of Farm and Dairy contained an editorial, headed "Sow Thistle Must be Checked." This editorial is most timely and I hope that every reader of Farm and Dairy has read it. It is a good plan for editors of agricultural papers to take occasional trips through the country and see things as they really are. It would also do a world of good if more of our farmers would do the same thing, as well as our representatives in the Legislature in order that they may fully realize to what extent the perennial sow thistle has claimed the ground and the damage it is doing to this country. I wish that every one could see this problem through the eyes of Farm and Dairy's representative. They would get alarmed and it would carry conviction. I can endorse every word that was said in that editorial; they are my sentiments and I would put a clincher on every sentence, so strongly do I feel in this matter.

GOVERNMENT ACTION REQUIRED

Sow thistle has gotten past the stage where even the most vigorous campaign of instruction on eradicating this most troublesome weed will be fruitful. Educating the people by moral persuasion through the press, or through our Farmers' Institutes, is not enough. Much good can be done through both mediums and must be done most vigorously and at once. As Farm and Dairy's representative puts it, "Unless some definite action is taken by the Government to check it, sow thistle will soon be as widely known and more common than the Canadian Thistle." I am of the same opinion that the Government has to step in and rule with an iron hand to check this pest, which is the worst and most dangerous weed that we have in Canada.

After watching the growth and habits of sow thistle for the last seven years, I have come to this conclusion: The root is most stubborn to destroy and the seed which is very fertile and abun-

dant is easily carried by the wind to adjoining fields. Farmers located on water courses, through the carelessness or thoughtlessness of one farmer in allowing a patch to go to seed may infest a whole community.

A GREAT PROBLEM

How to exterminate sow thistle has been the great problem with many good farmers, and the question has been freely discussed through Farm and Dairy. There is a way of destroying this pernicious pest and to do it quickly, but persistence and eternal vigilance has to be the watchword. We must bear in mind that it propagates easily from root and from seed. In the first place, it must be kept from going to seed. This will confine its propagating to the roots. The roots are very similar to couch or quack grass, full of joints or sections and running mostly in a horizontal direction, they throw out numerous new

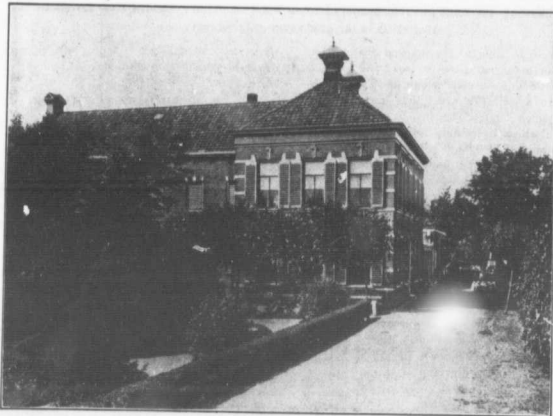
they will succumb to the heat and be destroyed. They cannot stand the hot July and August sun.

In this article I have not endeavored to discuss the methods of eradication at length, but rather to draw the attention of the public to the alarming nature of the perennial sow thistle. Some drastic measures, such as Farm and Dairy mentions are in force in Manitoba, will have to be enacted by the Government. Such measures may seem a hardship, but they will be to the best interests of the country. Definite action is required at once. It cannot come any too soon.

Fall Ribbing of Land Recommended

J. W. Mann, Leeds Co., Ont.

Many ask, "Is there any advantage in ribbing land in the Autumn?" To answer this question one need only mention that land cannot be ribbed



A Co-operative Combined Cheese Factory and Creamery in Friesland, Holland.

A glance at this building and its surroundings, tells us much that accounts for the success of Old Country people as dairymen. There is much depicted above that our factory owners may well copy, and which would work a great uplift in our dairy industry.

plants and these so thickly that they choke out all other plants.

In my experience, any attempt to destroy sow thistle in early spring or late fall is useless. Sow thistle roots though they be exposed all winter to the action of the frost and cold winds, will, when the spring rains and warm sunshine come, show signs of growth and unless very dry hot weather follows will grow again.

SHORT ROTATION AND LIBERAL CROPS

To eradicate sow thistle a system of short rotation is necessary and such crops selected as will prevent the thistle plants maturing seed. Where whole farms are infested, a bare summer-fallow for part of the farm will be the quickest way to get rid of them. They can be held in check with a hoe crop, but it means hard and persistent labor. Sow thistle will not spread in a hay field, the grass being cut before the seed matures. Such fields plowed early after haying can be given a pretty thorough cultivation till late fall when most all plants will be destroyed. Where fall wheat is grown, such land well prepared, will also keep them in check, the wheat being cut before the plant matures.

Rape or buckwheat are the two best crops to eradicate sow thistle. They both grow very rapidly and to such a density that sow thistle is smothered out. The advantage with the last named crops is that they can both be sowed late.

Good plowing is very essential to begin with. The roots running in a horizontal manner are easily thrown on top where with the hot sunshine

or drilled properly unless put in the very best state of cultivation. Very few in Eastern Ontario summer fallow their land. They depend upon a corn crop to clean the ground. When a corn is taken off it is usually too late for ribbing as the ground is wet and cannot be put in proper shape. August and September are usually the best months for summer fallowing. Many have been in the habit of simply plowing the land once and that late in October. In consequence, their land has become overrun with thistles, weeds and couch grass.

A practice much more to be recommended is as follows: as soon as the grain crop is off, or meadow land not intended for a meadow next year has been cleared, commence cultivating, doing it thoroughly with the King cultivator. This implement will bring all roots to the top of the ground where the sun or frost will kill them. Devote as much time to cultivating the ground as you would to plowing the same land once, and you will have it thoroughly loosened to the depth of seven or eight inches. Then by means of the attachment of three double mold-board plows or hillers, the ground can be put up in drills 21 inches from centre to centre. These are readily levelled in the spring by use of the cultivator with the ordinary teeth going once or twice lengthways of the rib.

On clay ground, ribbing should be practised when it is reasonably dry. Land thus prepared will come out like a garden in the spring. Less time and labor will be required in spring to put land in order for a crop where ribbing has been done and the land can be sown or planted much earlier than when left flat.

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