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The Truth about Sweet Clover

Continued from Page 9

cumarin than the older ones and consequently are less bitter.

For Hay and Pasture

As a hay crop, Sweet Clover cannot compete with Alfalfa. Full crops can be relied upon only every second year, whereas a well-established Alfalfa field will yield large crops during many consecutive years. In feeding value it is also inferior to Alfalfa, holding less protein and less carbohydrates than the latter. Where Alfalfa can be grown with reasonable success, Sweet Clover should, therefore, by no means be introduced. The principal advantage of Sweet Clover for pasture lies in its ability to shoot very early in the spring, to remain green during periods of prolonged drought, to continue growth until late in the fall, and to stand close grazing well. As a rule there is no danger of Sweet Clover producing bloating. But even with all these good qualities it is doubtful whether it will ever be of general importance as a pasture crop in any part of Canada. It will be useful only on soils too poor for other pastures. The statement sometimes made that, in Europe, Sweet Clover has been cultivated for hundreds of years as a staple crop for hay and pasture, has no foundation whatever. As a matter of fact, it is, in Europe, generally looked upon as a weed pure and simple.

Objections To Sweet Clover

Apart from what has been said against sweet clover, there are a few other objections of a more serious nature which should be given due and careful consideration by farmers before they decide to introduce sweet clover as a farm crop.

It is often claimed that Sweet Clover, on account of being a biennial plant, cannot assume the character of a weed, if properly handled. Being a biennial it lives only two years and if the plants are prevented from going to seed the second year, there should be no danger of Sweet Clover spreading all over the farm. Theoretically this is perfectly correct and sounds well, but in practice it turns out to be quite different. The writer goes so far as to say that Sweet Clover, when once introduced on a farm, will prove almost impossible to get rid of, no matter what precaution be taken. Many a farmer, believing that he had destroyed every Sweet Clover plant on his farm before it had had any chance to set seeds, has been painfully surprised to discover that, in spite of all, Sweet Clover suddenly appeared in the most unexpected places. In practice even the most careful eradication methods and the most careful effort to prevent it from going to seed have too often proven in vain. Over and over again it has been discovered that seed, in spite of the most careful attention, has been developed and dropped to the ground. Only a few such overlooked seeds will be sufficient to start a weed crop which very soon will prove detrimental to a well managed farm.

Even granting that Sweet Clover may be checked or quite suppressed in well cultivated and clean-kept fields, there are always places on a farm where Sweet Clover, once introduced, is apt to take a firm foothold. Along roadsides, fences, ditches, etc., where it is not properly looked after, it will have an ample opportunity to produce an abundance of seed which, by wind and water, will be carried over the farm and rapidly infest whole districts.

Menace To Alfalfa Seed

On worn-out soils or in districts where absolutely no other leguminous forage crop can be raised, the nuisance character of Sweet Clover may be counterbalanced by its good qualities. But in good or even medium agricultural districts, where clean farms and clean seed are essential to the success of farming, the weed characters of Sweet Clover make it utterly objectionable. This is especially the case in those districts of Canada where Alfalfa seed raising looks promising or has already proven a success. The young Sweet Clover plant is very much like the young Alfalfa plant and the average farmer will not be able to tell the difference. When the plants have developed blossoms the difference first becomes noticeable. In Alfalfa seed growing districts where Sweet Clover grows as a weed in waste

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