

Cut Worms in the Beet Fields

About the end of October last year the Department of Agriculture at Edmonton issued a newspaper article which contained a short life history of the cut worms and web worms that were attacking the beet crop at that time. Some specimens of the cut worm were collected by the Department for experiment, and from these it has been learned that probably very many of the cut worms in the fields are doomed before spring. Two enemies are attacking them, a fungus disease and a clear winged fly. This fly lays its eggs in the body of the cut worm, in which the maggots which hatch out from them live till they are full grown and ready to enter the pupal stage, when they kill their host and come to the outside and spin their cocoons.

These insect and fungus enemies are the means which nature provides for keeping cut worms, and creatures of that sort, in check, and in the history of all insect ravages this is found to be the case. In the economy of nature every creature has some enemy which preys upon it and ordinarily keeps it within bounds but occasionally a time comes when through an abundance of food or for some other reason they develop very rapidly and get away from the control of those agencies which keep them in check and they become a plague as they have in this case. As the plague increases so do the parasites, which in a short time are able to regain the mastery, and we have a return to the normal conditions again.

It is gratifying to note that this is what is happening now and in a short time the cut worm plague will be a thing of the past. However, many of the cut worms are left, and there are quite enough to destroy the young beet crop this spring unless something is done to prevent them.

The experience of last year ought to teach us the advisability of attending to this early, and if as soon as the beets are sown the paris green and bran mash is sown between the drills of beets, either drilled between the rows or sown broadcast there should be no trouble. No one who has not experienced it would believe how readily the cut worms eat this mixture and in every case where it has been tried it has been found an effectual remedy.

The mash should consist of one lb. of paris green to 50 lbs. of bran, and it has even been found that a mixture of double the quantity of bran has been effective. The water used for mixing should be slightly sweetened and it is always best to mix the bran and water before adding the poison, as unless this is done the paris green sinks to the bottom. The whole mixture should be moist enough to stick together, and yet dry enough to crumble easily through the fingers. A sharp lookout should also be kept for cut worms in the gardens, and similar methods adopted to destroy them.

The worms come out to the surface at night and it is therefore not necessary to bury the bran mash. Some of the largest beet growers tried this remedy last year and found the material only cost them about 30c. per acre. It is an effectual remedy and is neither costly nor difficult of application and is well worth trying by every beet grower if he would protect his crop and save himself trouble and annoyance and a deal of extra expense.

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