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Editorial.

A Soil Problem in the Territories.

A lack of abundant rainfall in some districts of the Territories this year is a strong reminder that the most immediate problem confronting many farmers, is how to maintain soil moisture. The summer-fallow system has been advocated very strongly by such men as Angus McKay, Superintendent of Indian Head Experimental Farm, and the wisdom of it has been fully borne out by repeated heavy crops at that point and elsewhere. As is well known, the method pursued at the Indian Head Experimental Farm is one of alternate grain-growing and summer-fallowing, or, in other words, one which permits the land being summer-fallowed every other year. By this means the moisture is stored up during the season of cultivation, and retained very largely for the crop the succeeding year. When there is a comparatively rainy season, it frequently happens that the crops on fall and spring plowed land yield heavily, but usually, if not always, the fallow comes out ahead.

The summer-fallow, therefore, brings results, owing to the fact that it holds the moisture in the soil, and at the present time it, therefore, must be regarded as a necessary method of procedure in districts where dry weather is to be feared. Nevertheless, the fact should not be forgotten that the results of repeated summer-fallowing can have, in time, but one conclusion, and that, the ultimate destruction or consumption of the fertility in the soil, and consequent light crops. There is, of course, an almost inexhaustible supply of plant-food in the soil at the present time, and it may take years even of summer-fallowing to deplete it to any extent, but as surely as man goes heavily in debt and pay-day comes some time, so surely will the time come when even summer-fallowing will leave the tiller of the soil without as heavy a crop as he expected.

During a visit of a member of the "Farmer's Advocate" to the Experimental Farm at Indian Head, a short time ago, this question was pretty thoroughly gone into by Prof. Shutt, Dominion Chemist, who was then passing through on his way from B. C. to Ottawa. He believes that the most important problem confronting Western agriculture to-day is how to restore or maintain fertility and at the same time retain the moisture. He does not believe that we have yet any substitute for the summer-fallow, but realizes that the time has come when the matter must be dealt with seriously. It is the part of experimental farms and scientists to be working out those problems in advance of the people.

Upon being questioned as to what possible channel he thought held out any hope of providing a solution to the problem, Prof. Shutt said he believed it might come through the growing of some leguminous crop. Clover, he believed, would be out of the question, and peas were, perhaps, the only thing. The price of seed, however, stood in the way of using them largely, as it would cost at least \$2.00 per acre to supply sufficient seed to give a heavy crop for plowing down. There is no doubt that peas is a great restorer of nitrogen as well as humus, both of which are rapidly lost or worn out through summer-fallowing. The question is a large one, however, and one deserving the most serious consideration of everyone interested in advanced agriculture in the West.

Breeding and Selling Stock.

The farmer whose inclination or ambition is to own and breed pure-bred stock of any class, should, in order to a reasonable hope of success, first consider well the breed best adapted to his taste, to his farm and locality, and to the market for the produce, in the form of young stock for breeding purposes, and, in the case of a dairy herd, of the milk and its products. Having satisfied himself on these points, he will, if his surplus capital be limited, do well to commence cautiously by purchasing one or two or a few females, being careful to observe that they have the indications of sound health, strong constitution, and good feeding qualities, that they conform to the approved type of the breed to which they belong, and are registered or guaranteed eligible to registry in the recognized record of that breed. The next step will be the selection of a suitable sire to mate with the females procured, for the best results in the progeny. If it is considered that the purchase of a sire of the desired quality for so few females is not warranted, the latter may be taken from home to be bred to the best available, but, as a rule the farmer will have grade females of the same class to which the same sire may be used with profitable results in improving their produce and increasing the value of his general stock; and, in addition, some returns may be secured by way of fees for service in the neighborhood. In pure-bred cattle and sheep at least, it will be found, on the whole, more satisfactory and profitable to own the sire, as in the case of the former, if he cannot be disposed of to advantage for breeding purposes by sale or exchange, he can be fattened and sold for beef at a good price; and in the case of a ram that has proven a good sire, he can generally be well sold or exchanged for breeding. The foundation of a herd or flock being thus well laid, the process of building a herd simply consists in continuing the use of superior sires, retaining the female produce until a sufficient number is acquired, and selling the males as well as one can. In the case of the latter, it will probably be found more satisfactory to use the pruning knife on such as are inferior or not likely to be salable at a good price for breeding purposes, but may grow into useful animals for the market for butcher's stock. A surplus of unsalable entire males is a source of vexation and loss, and should be avoided if possible, as they will soon "eat their heads off."

Success in the sale of seed stock depends largely on keeping the animals always in good condition. A beast in thin flesh or neglected condition, no matter how good its breeding or quality, will fail to make a good impression on the average buyer, or to prove attractive or sell for what it is really worth; while one that is less desirable to the expert, if seen in the best condition, will catch the eye of the less discerning buyer, making a favorable impression at first sight, and selling readily at its full value. Another medium of success in the business is advertising. In all cases where the foundation stock is large enough to afford any considerable surplus for sale, and even in the case of small herds or flocks, the male increase must be disposed of, and a sum equal to a commission upon each animal which it is expected to sell may profitably be spent in advertising the herd. The paper space having been decided upon, in the paper that reaches the class of readers most likely to become purchasers, it should be kept filled with announcements of the operations and breeding of the herd, and of the special animals it is desired to dispose of. These announcements, supplemented by

reading notices or gossip items, and an occasional illustration from a good photograph of a representative animal in the herd, or of one that is for sale, form an excellent method of attracting attention and securing purchasers. There is no question but that the most successful business men, in live stock as well as in other lines, in this day and generation are those who advertise freely and continuously, paying attention to making such changes in the reading matter as are likely to catch the eye of the prospective buyer. It is a slow process working up a trade without letting the world know that you are in the business, and no matter how good a class of stock one has, his field for selling will be restricted or enlarged in proportion as he gives publicity to his business.

Lessons which Summer-fallowing Should Teach.

In many portions of the Territories, the present summer has been dry—just ideal weather to give best results from summer-fallowing. Yet, with every climatic advantage favoring the best returns for labor expended, in many instances the poor quality of work done, the time of doing it, and the implements used, frustrated entirely the intended purpose, and for that reason we feel that a few words now may be helpful and prevent many from making the same mistake another season.

Every farmer should look carefully over the portion which he has fallowed this year, noting how it stands for weeds. If the season has been dry in his locality, he should dig down about a foot or so in several places, including the standing grain, in a spot where soil composition and the advantages of moisture are about equal; then compare. If the summer-fallowed land does not contain most moisture, one of the main advantages for fallowing in the West has been missed. By making comparisons at this season, the necessity of working your summer-fallow properly or else doing without it in the future will be seen.

Those who have opportunities of travelling through the country and who are interested in its agricultural advancement frequently see the results of misapplied labor, and not least under this heading is that which has been expended on summer-fallow. That the summer-fallow has its place under present conditions in many parts of the West, and, further, that dry seasons are the ones which make the practice of summer-fallowing of advantage, few will dispute. As a means of killing weeds and conserving soil moisture it has many advantages and numerous supporters, and during a dry season a properly worked fallow largely answers both, no matter which purpose you have in view while working it.

To kill weeds, the ground should be often stirred so as to never allow them to become strong, either through leaf or root formation. This frequent stirring in dry weather forms a mulch, which prevents the extension of capillary tubes from the moisture beneath to the surface.

It is common in many places where summer-fallowing is practiced to allow the weeds to grow in profusion until nearly matured, and then plow them under. Where the plowing is done thoroughly, and before there is danger of weed seeds being so ripened that they will grow, it kills a great many, but is in no sense a conservator of soil moisture or a saver of fertility. The growing weeds, if fairly thick, require as much moisture and plant food up to the time of plowing as a grain crop.