Lessons From Summer Field Meetings

NO. 3.

The idea of producing the clover seed on the cleanest fields and weeding the crop in the field at the proper time was well received at the meetings, and, I believe, will be acted upon in many cases this year. In a district where catchfly was very bad in alsike fields last year, there were a few who pulled it out of their fields, and, as a result, they had clean seed, which was sold locally to the farmers of that district this spring.

The discrimination in price in favor of good, pure seed, which the seedsmen are prepared to give, from $1.00 to $2.00 per bushel, is a strong incentive for farmers to weed out their fields.

From the number of specimens of pennycress or stinkweed which has been comparatively unknown in Ontario until recently, and which were brought to the meetings for identification, it would appear that it is widening its area. It should be stamped out at once, as it is a pernicious winter annual and the seed would become a very hard impurity to remove from red clover seed. It is doubtless coming in through the use of wheat screenings from our Northwest, which many flour and feed dealers are selling for chicken feed quite generally over the province.

In some places the broad leafed dock or

RED DOCK

is spreading faster than its traveling mate, the ordinary curled dock. Like the curled dock it is a perennial and a heavy seeder. Another perennial which is a bad one to eradicate and which is spreading, is the bladder campion. Its seed resembles the seed of catchfly. The greatest fear is expressed over the alarming spread of the perennial sow thistle. Most thorough cultivation is essential for its eradiction. The broad-sheared cultivator is allowed to be one of the best agents for its destruction. The orange hawk weed was discovered to have broken from the flower garden and was flourishing on the roadside in one of the western villages. Two varieties of fleabane were found nearly everywhere in great profusion this summer. Chickory and blue weed are spreading badly along the roadsides in some localities.

CLOVER SEED PROSPECTS

Owing to the hard frosts of the winter with scant snow protection, and this followed with a slow, backward growth in the early spring, the prospects for good crops of seed are not so promising as last year. The timothy meadows are, as a rule, thin. Many alsike fields are patchy and therefore weedy and rather short in the straw. There are notable exceptions, however. Many fields had a lot of timothy in them, which lessens the value of the alsike seed. It should be topped. The new seeding has been largely timothy and clover mixed and the timothy is showing in the first crop much more than usual. The clover is very backward in blooming, and not a full bloom at that. Unless the clover meadows were pastured the first crop will be late in being cut, and as the clover midge fly seems plentiful, a good crop of seed from mown fields seems doubtful.

Unless farmers do more or less weeding in their alsike and mammoth fields, there is bound to be a dirtier crop harvested this year than last. The weeds got a better start than the clover. In the districts where ribgrass or buckhorn is bad attention should be paid to that plant about a week after ceasing to pasture or the hay is mown off and the plants spudded out. They can be seen best at that time. One sign of a plentiful crop is the presence of plenty of bumblebees.

Alsike fields yield much larger quantities of seed where honey bees are kept, which shows the importance of cross fertilization through this source.

THE SEED CONTROL ACT

is a very popular law. While farmers are not very well acquainted with its provisions, they know such a law exists, and that it is in their interest. They know, too, that they never had the same opportunity to buy as much really good seed as they had this spring. Many of them were misled by the term used by the seedsmen, viz., Government standard. Many believed that any bag with a lead seal on it was a guarantee that the seed contained therein was gilt-edged. As a matter of fact, Government standard seed was only a guarantee that there were not more than five noxious weed seeds per 1,000 in the sample. Some of the higher grades were No. 1. He was not aware that the law prevented him as a producer to sell for seeding purposes to his neighbor low grade seed such as a dealer would be prohibited from selling under the law.

Taking the crops generally, there is promise of a good average. In many parts there had been too much rain, and on the low undrained land the crops were badly injured. The pea crop which was the largest for years was suffering the most. Fall wheat, where not winter killed, was doing splendid. In nearly every part the corn crop was smaller in area and was suffering more or less from the cold, backward weather. Oats, as well as barley were keeping a good color and promise well. Smut was showing itself somewhat, but every year more farmers are treating their seed grain to kill the spores.

T. G. RAYNOR.

Some of the Best Crop Rotations

A good five-year rotation for grain in some of the states of the Middle Northwest is first year, small grain; second and third years, meadow and pasture of grasses and clovers seeded the first year with the grain; fourth year, small grain; fifth year, corn. Apply the manure before the corn crop; then, beginning the second five-year period, repeat the rotation.

A four-year rotation found useful on some farms is as follows: First year, small grain; second year, red clover; third year, small grain; fourth year, corn; and repeat.

A three-year rotation as follows gives splendid conditions for the wheat or other small grain: First year, small grain; second year, red clover; third year, corn; and repeat.

Small grain and corn in a two-year rotation place the land in good condition for each crop of grain.

In the South cotton and cow peas can take the place of the corn and clover in a four, three, or two-year rotation; and in many cases the cow peas may follow the winter wheat, making two crops in one year, thus shortening the rotation by gaining one year in the three or four-year rotation.

By following some such method of natural farming the leguminous crops help to add nitrogen and organic substance to the soil surface of weeds and will provide the rather well compacted furrow slice needed to cause the small grain plant to stool well and to thrive throughout its growth.

That the rotation scheme is not all to favor the small grain crop may be shown in case of the five-year rotation first named.

The wheat, by serving as a nurse crop among which the newly seeded grass and clover may pass their first unproductive season without cost, prepares the land for the two crops of grass. The grass crops, by cleaning, resting and enriching the soil, prepare the land for a good crop of small grain the fourth year. The second crop of small grain, which may often be followed with a crop of rye or turnips, sown in spring to make pasturage among the grain stubble in autumn, furnishes conditions under which the manure may be hauled out and plowed under in fall, winter or spring in preparation for the corn crop. The corn grown the fifth year reduces the manure from too great activity, clears the surface soil and compacts the furrow slice so that it is in nearly ideal conditions under which the small grain may be put in with shoe or hoe drill or broadcast and disked in or covered with other suitable implement, and the second series of fine yearly crops started out in good condition.

EVERY FARMER SHOULD PLAN HIS CAMPAIGN

Every farmer should work out his own farm scheme, map it out on paper where he can project it forward ten years or more under a definite rotation system.

When the ten years are up, the record of yields for each year placed in ten annual farm maps will enable him to average the several crops and determine what each yielded to the acre.

Before that time his state experiment station will probably have given him items of average cost, so that he can calculate the average cost to the acre of each kind of crop.

By balancing accounts he will be able to tell what was the net profit or loss of each kind of grain grown and of each kind of crop fed to live stock. His neighbors also will have begun more of system and many of their figures will serve to guide his future operations.

Let the farmer block out his farm scheme, submit it to farmer friends for criticism, and finally send copies to the professor of agriculture in his state agricultural college, who may be able to give advice as to kind of crops in the rotation, as to the plan of rotation; also as to the preparation and fertilization of the soil.—Prof. Wm. Hays, Washington, D.C.

Had Proved It

A good story was told at an election meeting the other night. An Irishman obtained permission from his employer to attend a wedding. He turned up the next day with his arm in a sling and a black eye.

"Hello, what is the matter?" said his employer.

"Well, you see," said the wedding guest, "we were very merry yesterday, and I saw a fellow strutting about with a swallow-tailed coat and a white waistcoat. 'And who might you be,' said I. 'I'm the best man,' sez he, and begorra he was, too."