

Farm Experiences

TO INCREASE CROP YIELDS

Everyone will realize that, with drier seasons and the encroachment of weeds, the crop yields of the average farmer are far from satisfactory, and to make farming more remunerative we must adopt some method of producing heavier yielding crops. In England we could safely reckon on doubling the mangel crop by a liberal use of kainit, and application of super-phosphate to turnips had a like result. Such methods are not applicable here for obvious reasons, but by proper methods wonderful results can be obtained.

My experiences are not extensive, but may be as valuable to others as to myself. I have found that no one operation will materially increase the yield. The best and surest method is to adopt a system of cultivation that will keep the soil in good physical condition and conserve the greatest amount of moisture, because, other things being equal, nothing will do more to guarantee a crop than moisture in the soil. No matter how rich the land in plant food nor how good the seed, without sufficient moisture in the soil to keep plant food in solution right up to the day of ripening, the crops will not be a success.

Tillage Methods

In summer-fallowing, I aim to disc the ground in the fall, which checks the evaporation and mixes the stubble with the soil, which helps it to decay. The discing can be repeated in the spring with good results, especially helping to germinate weed seeds. Plow deep, six or eight inches if the subsoil will permit. This makes a reservoir for water to be stored thru the summer. Plow early, as every ten days' delay after the middle of May may be a bushel to the acre less. By plowing deep, packing and harrowing at once and keeping black all summer, we have the best condition possible for holding moisture. In the spring seed as early as possible, harrowing before and after seeding. If not previously packed, it will pay to pack fallow in the spring, using the surface packer and harrowing after to restore the mulch. When the seed bed is thus prepared it will invariably increase the crop to harrow the growing grain if the ground cracks after a rain or if weeds appear. I find that in any season this method will assure from three to five bushels more than plowing in July and cultivating without system or thought of conserving moisture.

In the fall, plowing, packing and harrowing at once gives the best result in my experience. When it takes eleven inches of snow to make one inch of water, anyone will realize how little moisture is kept by leaving the plowing rough. The winds in fall, winter and spring take many inches of water by evaporation. In any case, fall or spring plowing should be packed or harrowed thoroughly. Many farmers favor spring plowing and have poor crops on fall plowed land, but I think the reason is entirely due to loss of moisture from the loose plowed soil.

Cultivating the soil, fining the soil particles, with harrows, disc or cultivator, makes the plant food more easily taken up by the tiny roots and will benefit any cereal crop. Try a strip in a field for barley. It works wonders in a dry season, but it must be done and the seed sown at once, so that moisture is not evaporated too freely. With soil well pulverized, full of moisture, packed to hinder too free circulation of air, and a dry mulch about two inches in depth, we have an ideal seed bed.

Use Plump Seed

The next step is to have the best seed obtainable. Clean, plump, well filled seed of strong germination test has a strong tendency to produce a healthy, vigorous plant that will withstand drought and disease and give a yield of high quality and weight. Five to ten bushels to the acre is an ordinary gain from select seed over light, poorly filled grain. Every farmer has not the facilities to enable him to grow and preserve hand-selected plots, but with little trouble anyone can sow a small acreage with high-class seed and

WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE?

We welcome contributions to this page from our readers. Each article should relate to one subject only; it should be the actual experience of the writer and should not exceed 500 words in length. Every farmer has some particular way of doing a thing which saves him time and which his fellow farmers could make use of to advantage. If you have a "good thing," would it not be a generous act to tell your friends about it? All the readers of The Guide are friends, so make this a place for "swapping" ideas. If you have nothing else to write about, give your experiences on any of the following subjects:

What work can be most profitably done on the roads in the spring? How can roads in your district be best maintained?

Which way have you found to be the most profitable in marketing your grain? By the load at the elevator, consigned to a commission firm, on the track, or how?

When do you figure on having your cows freshen? And why?

What provision do you make for succulent crops for your pigs during the summer? What crops do you sow, and when and how for this purpose?

How have you made provision for a plentiful water supply on your farm? Did you have any difficulty finding water? What method did you adopt or what led you to dig your well where you found water?

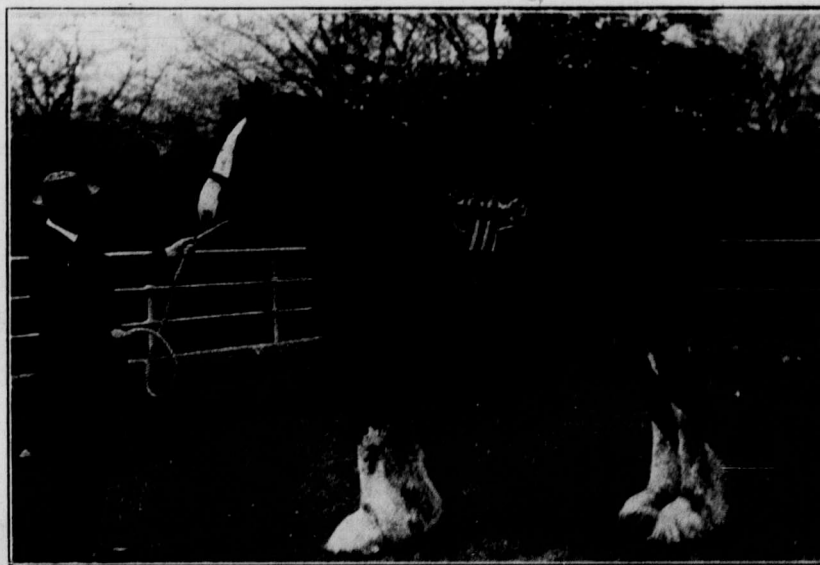
How much did you make feeding steers during the past winter? What did you feed, how much and so on?

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clean it thoroughly with the fanning mill, thus raising the standard of his seed grain greatly. If this is done with one class of grain each year, good returns will result. I believe in keeping a suitable strain on the farm rather than buying new seed every year to get a "change." In using the fanning mill it is hardly possible to clean too heavily, and for good results almost one-third should be cleaned from any sample right from the machine. One cleaning is rarely enough unless the mill is efficient and the grain put thru slowly. In most mills the wind blast is of little use in removing light or shrunken kernels. The wire sieve with half-inch oblong mesh, ten to twelve wires to the inch, in the under shoe, is the best cleaner. This is still inferior

This may have to be increased with varieties that do not tiller freely. The state of the soil is a ruling factor in determining quantities to sow. I have noted a marked difference in early sown crops over those sown late. The longer period of sunlight the growing plant has the stronger and hardier it will be, and the yield is generally in proportion to the growth of the plant. While it will be obvious that no single operation will make a great effect on the bushels threshed per acre, careful preparation of seed bed, good seed and up-to-date methods will result in larger yields.

Another source of heavier yields that I have proved very important is barnyard manure. I think it will make the greatest difference of anything in proportion to the cost. I spread thinly on



Famous Clydesdale stallion, "Sir Hugo" (10923), foaled June, 1898, sire "Sir Everard" (5353). The late Wm. Taylor, of Park Mains, Renfrew, owner of Sir "Everard," "Sir Hugo" and many other good ones, is seen holding the horse.

to the new graders, which are splendid machines for preparing seed grain. In every experiment I find that large kernels produce a heavier yield than small, heavy more than light; so, if you would raise the yield, use the best seed. While treatment for smut does not materially increase the yield it gives stronger vitality, combats disease, and gives a pure sample of grain.

Depth and Quantity of Seed

Depth of seeding may vary considerably. In early sowing, when the ground is cold and wet, the seed will often do best only an inch deep. As the moisture level gets lower the seed must be put down deeper; and with late seeding three inches may give the best results. The best guide is to put the seed into the moist soil, because it needs a firm, moist condition for proper germination and to ensure a strong root growth.

The quantity of seed to sow also varies with circumstances. I sow of wheat a bushel and a half in good fallow where moisture is plentiful, a little less on land that I judge has less available plant food. If the plant cannot get moisture when the head is filling, the quality and yield suffer; so, if it is too rank, the result is even worse. In oats and barley, two bushels and one and three-quarters give me best results.

land to be spring plowed for wheat or barley, and harrow and disc well before plowing. This may make all the difference between failure and success in a dry season. By plowing four inches deep the plant roots get full advantage of much available plant food, and the result with me in the dry summer just passed was six bushels per acre over unmanured ground. There is no treatment I can more strongly recommend for the coming season.

T. W. W.

REPAIR TIME

In watching for the big losses on the farm, we lose sight of the many small leaks which are really worth notice. The machinery and harness does not receive the care and attention it should on most farms. It can be very profitably attended to at any time in the year, but the winter months are usually not too crowded with work. If you have no machine shed, now is the time to overhaul the machinery; the days are getting warm and the ground is bare.

Every farmer should have a small blacksmith outfit. I would not be without one. My outfit consists of a portable forge with an eight-inch blower, a 100 pound anvil, a small post drill, a 40 pound box vise, one pair of flat tongs, one pair of half-round tongs, a small set

of dies and taper taps, a hardie, two or three punches and chisels I made myself, and a hammer. An outfit of this description will pay for itself in a short time, in the saving of both time and money. With very little experience any farmer can make his own clevises, plow rings, harrow teeth, barn door and gate latches, hinges, etc. An old piece of machinery can often be bought for next to nothing. This will furnish lots of iron, etc., for repairs. Now is the time to sharpen your harrow teeth, put new hooks on the eveners, make a few extra harrow teeth, plow rings, clevises, etc., for use in case of emergency. The best time to repair is immediately after the breakdown.

As regards repairing harness, the following are a few hints from my experience. Never fix harness with rivets. It is cheaper in the long run to sew with wax thread, altho it takes longer. Always use new leather for repairs and don't forget to channel your leather to allow the stitches to go below the surface, thus preventing wear. Twitch every stitch good and tight. With a very little practise one can make his own halters, tie straps, etc., and most of his harness parts during the winter months, when time is not so valuable. It will also pay well to wash the harness and rub well with neatsfoot oil or with prepared harness dressing. This lengthens the life of the harness and makes it pliable and nicer to handle. Now is the time to grease all the machinery, tighten all loose nuts and burrs. Replace worn bolts with new ones. In short, put everything in thorough working order and strive to keep it there.

—A. K. H.

TO COMBAT WEEDS

You invite your readers to write on farm topics, so I will give experience and method in fighting weeds. Before land is sown two processes should be gone thru; first, get the weed seeds to grow; second, destroy the plants. This is how I go about it and it will be seen to be quite different from the usual process, whereby summer-fallow is sown in spring as soon as possible. My mode of procedure is to harrow summer-fallow as soon as fit, to start the weed seeds to grow. Then I cross-harrow fall plowing, which received two strokes after the plow, then plow for oats, harrowing immediately, until the weeds are coming up on the summer-fallow. Next I cultivate the summer-fallow and sow at once, but do not harrow until grain is about to appear above ground. Next I cultivate the fall plowing to destroy the weeds, sow at once and harrow before grain is up. By this time the weeds will be coming up on spring plowing. Destroy them and sow at once.

Notice that in each case the weed seeds are induced to grow, the plants are destroyed and the grain sown in a well prepared seed bed. The grain comes right along, and the weeds that do come up are so far behind the grain they never amount to much. I imagine some one will say, "Does not this plan make wheat seeding too late?" No, it does not. My wheat is ripe each year as soon as that of any of my neighbors.

Sask.

R. H.

ARE CHAIN HARROWS USEFUL

I would like to ask some of my brother farmers what they think about the English chain harrows for this country. I think they would be very useful, especially for making a good seed bed, to conserve moisture and also to level the land. They can be made any width and length, the longer the better I should say. Have any farmers had any experience with the chain harrows?

PRACTICAL FARMER.

Barney O'Keefe, sadly inebriated, had wandered into a church where a wedding was in progress, according to the New York American. Unnoticed he sank into a back seat. Presently the preacher asked the usual question whether anyone present had any reason to give why the ceremony should not be performed, and Mr. O'Keefe arose with maudlin solemnity. "I've nothin' ag'in 'em, yer riverince and no objection to make, but bein' as I'm married myself I know they'll have a rotten time."