

# FARMER'S ADVOCATE

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## Flax.

A few years ago flax-growing received considerable attention by many Manitoba farmers, but the results were not sufficiently satisfactory to encourage further efforts. To a number of causes may be attributed the unsatisfactory results, the chief of which were the difficulty of obtaining clean seed and the very low prices for flaxseed that prevailed that fall. Flax-growing in Dakota has steadily increased during late years, and it is certainly worthy of careful consideration by the farmers on this side of the line. A large oilcloth manufacturing company, recently established in Montreal, together with one or two oil mills in the same city, that together could utilize all the flaxseed grown in Canada, will not likely permit the two old companies in Manitoba and Ontario to hold down the price of flax, as they had done in the past, so that it could not be exported, and thus discourage its more general growth. The enormous demand for paints and oils, created by the general prosperity both in the United States and Canada, will tend to increase the demand for flaxseed, and, on the basis of the world's present supply, prices will range well over a dollar per bushel for high-grade flax this fall. Some authorities expect the price to be \$1.25. With decent cultivation, flax will yield from fifteen to twenty bushels per acre, and anyone can see whether it is not worth considering as a profitable crop.

Flax requires good cultivation and clean land, although it will do fairly well on early breaking. Best results would, of course, follow from back-setting, or a clean summer-fallow, but good yields may be had on fall or spring plowed land that is surface-cultivated frequently from early spring till seeding-time, to germinate and destroy all weed seeds that lie near the surface. Flax is a small, rather delicate plant at first, and can't live in a weed patch. It should be sown from May 15th to May 25th, but may ripen if sown as late as June 1st. It is generally conceded by the Dakota growers and by the Mennonites, who always grow it extensively, that a half bushel of seed per acre is better than thicker seeding, as when thin on the ground, the plants branch out more and will carry more seed bolls.

Much of the flax grown last year was, like other grains, damaged by weather, and consequently is of very inferior quality for seed purposes, and, unless with very choice samples, would require much thicker sowing than half bushel per acre to insure a stand. A quantity of flaxseed from the Argentine Republic has been imported by a Duluth firm, who have experimented with imported seed from Bombay, Calcutta, and the Argentine, as compared with North Dakota grown seed, and the results of these experiments show that the Argentine flax produced about five bushels per acre more, and of a brighter, larger sample, than Dakota seed. The Bombay and Calcutta seed did not give satisfactory results. The Argentine flax is a lightish red in color, and large and plump, and while the price in Manitoba is \$3 per bushel, against \$2 per bushel for home-grown, it is probably the cheapest seed.

Where flax is grown extensively, it is cut with the binder, without tying, and left lying on the ground in loose bundles till threshed, when it is gathered in basket racks, without a man building the load, to prevent as far as possible threshing out. Any good separator will thresh flax and make a good job of it. Argentine seed may now be had in this country at the price above mentioned.

## Spelt.

Its value as a crop for Iowa will depend entirely on its ability to out-yield the common cereals. It is not superior in other respects. Iowa Experiment Station, Bulletin No. 27.

## The Last Call for Sound Seed.

Once again we would remind every one to be careful as to the seed used. The man who has not got caution enough or has not enough "get" in him to test his seed grain, does not deserve to be called a farmer. Don't rely on tests made in midwinter, for before seed time it's possible damp or damaged grain may heat and its germinating power be injured. Our attention has been called to seed oats that have been sold in large quantities. They are said to have come from the western part of the Territories, and appear to have been run through a "drier." Many of those who have tested these Western oats this year say that only a very small percentage of them will germinate. TEST THEM, and, in fact, *all your seed grain* NOW. Better buy seed over again, if need be, than sow stuff that won't grow. Some of the above-mentioned seed oats we have seen are very much mixed as to variety, and contain an interesting collection of weed seeds.

## Farm Siftings.

Among the farmers, the scarcity of feed is frequently commented upon. Scarcity of bedding is so evident by the condition of the stock and stables, that a visitor to the Province would be forced to conclude that straw, at least, did not materialize last year. Such was not the case, as the annual bonfires of straw were burned last fall by numbers of our farmers. Such a proceeding is *inexcusable* in the light of recent events. It seems that no matter how severe the lessons of the past, some people never will learn. Even if hay was scarce, a little chop added to the straw that has been burned would have tided many a breeding and growing animal over the critical point between now and grass-time.

The question of creameries is being brought to the front again in some districts as the panacea for poor crops and hard times. One finds that in some districts where creameries were running, they were not at all satisfactory to the patrons, for several reasons. Assertions of dishonest dealings on the part of the maker or managers are often heard, and in a few cases parties that sent cream to some of the butter factories were cheated or rogued out of the bulk of a season's cream. In the light of such experiences, it behooves the creamery promoters to insist on honest dealing and the employment of good makers *only*. The local buttermaker and his employers might also advise and impress upon their patrons the importance of sowing some summer feed for cows so that the milk supply does not fall off in August and September.

The directors of the Manitou Agricultural Society are determined to have a good Clydesdale in the district, and in order to make a choice have offered a prize to be competed for, the winner to travel in the district, and to serve mares of the Society's members at a set price. A very good plan, which might be followed with advantage by others in the Province.

At a recent auction sale of young bulls of Short-horn blood, the anomaly was seen in the offering of two *grade* Angus bulls, and that by a man claiming credit for introducing new blood, forsooth! into the country. In the words of Holy Writ—"O Lord, how long?" The interests of any breed are damaged severely by the offering of inferior specimens; such a shortsighted policy always reacts on the seller as on the buyer.

The winter season gives one ideas on tree-planting that might not occur to anyone at planting time, viz., plant trees far enough from the buildings that drifts will not interfere with the work in winter time; put the clumps or shelter-belts at least 100 feet from the buildings. Don't plant trees in straight lines, put them out so that the walks and drives form gentle curves. Straight lines of trees do not rest or refresh the eye as do clumps and curved borders.

Many men could gain valuable knowledge regarding pig-feeding or handling sows in winter at the Sheep and Swine Breeders' conventions, and thus avoid heavy losses among the young pigs from rheumatism, thumps and kindred troubles.

Don't sell those fat cattle until finished; any animal sells the better for being in prime order.

INTER PRIMOS.

## Range Cattle Should be Sold by Weight.

From time to time statements are published in the local press which make it appear that there is a very wide discrimination in the prices of range cattle on the north and south sides of the 49th parallel. Statements are made that individual cattle that have "drifted" across the boundary from Canadian territory, and that have found their way to Chicago markets through the Stock Growers' Associations, have realized their owners more money, when freight, duty and incidental expenses were paid, than if they had been sold at home. Relative to this matter, the Secretary of the Manitoba Pure-bred Cattle Breeders' Association hands us a letter from the Secretary of the Western Stock Growers' Association which is most explicit and introduces a matter of greatest importance to the ranchmen, viz., selling by weight. Surely the ranchmen, than whom there is no more intelligent class of men, will not be slow to insist upon a system which will be so greatly to their advantage. Below we publish Mr. Mathew's letter:

DEAR SIR,—I am in receipt of your letter of the 9th inst. I am aware of the statements to which you refer, but they do not, in my opinion, represent the average conditions. I have knowledge of individual instances where the Canadian owner has received a higher price for his steer sold in Chicago than he would have from a home buyer, but in nearly every instance there has been a good reason for it: either the animal had missed the customs duty (as sometimes happens) or else it was an old range steer that had been missed in the gathering, and had consequently grown proportionately weighty. It must be borne in mind that the prevailing conditions in the two countries are quite dissimilar. Here we sell by the head, irrespective of size or quality. In the States they are bought by weight. That, I think, explains why in individual instances animals *may* net their Canadian owners a bigger price than if sold at home. I venture to assert, however, that the average Canadian animal sold in Chicago will rarely net its owner the market price at present obtained in this country. I will give you a few instances: The proceeds of eight animals from this country, sold through the Montana Stock Association, about a year ago in Chicago, netted as follows:

1 steer, \$42.50; 1 steer, \$38; 1 steer, \$30.50; 1 cow, \$16.00; 1 steer, \$30.80; 2 steers, \$55.50; 1 steer, \$34.00. These figures, you will perceive, do not in any instance reach the prevailing values in this country; but, on the contrary, with perhaps the exception of the first one, are far below. This is, of course, to be accounted for by the customs duty and commission, freight, feed, round-up and yardage charges. If it were possible to avoid these, or at least the customs duty, the price netted would certainly be far in excess of that prevailing here. The chief reason of this discrimination is undoubtedly, in my opinion, the system of buying, but it should be borne in mind that under existing conditions it is not one that effects the producer to any great extent. When the system of buying that prevails in the States obtains in this country, then I believe that prices for *good* cattle will considerably increase, but, on the other hand, those for rough, undersized and inferior grades will correspondingly decrease. As it is now, any animal fit for beef fetches the same price, no matter whether it is a well ribbed-up, table-backed Short-horn with all the characteristics of his race strongly in evidence, or a long-legged, slab-sided, inbred Dogie; the only difference would appear to be in their ultimate destinations, the former going to the export trade to Great Britain, while the latter supplies the mining centers of B. C.

I believe, however, that the buying system is on the verge of a change. Last year quite a number of range cattle were sold by weight, and the results were so satisfactory that it is certain to lead to a more extended trial this year. It will then, I believe, be simply a question of time for it to become universal, and prices will in due course, to a great extent, regulate themselves. If I can be of further use to you, I shall be very happy to do so.

(Sgd.) R. G. MATHEW, Secretary.