

Bedding Materials Compared

There is much argument as to the relative values of the different kinds of bedding material for stock. Most stockmen seem to think that wheat straw will go further than oat straw for this purpose, and it has been commonly believed that shavings and sawdust will go much further than either kind of straw.

A test of different kinds of bedding materials was conducted at the Illinois station in the spring of 1917, with interesting results. It was conducted primarily for the purpose of determining what kind of bedding material is most economical to use at the experiment station. A test of the water-holding capacities of the materials showed that when soaked for 12 hours and then allowed to drain for 24 hours oat straw retained about 19 per cent more water than wheat straw, and twice as much as ordinary mixed shavings.

From this it would be expected that more shavings than wheat straw and more wheat straw than oat straw would be required to keep animals bedded. Such proved to be the case. With comparable lots of beef cows, dairy cows, and brood mares, 40 to 82 per cent more shavings than oat straw and 9 to 18 per cent more wheat straw than oat straw was used.

From the standpoint of fertility value of the manure, oat straw is somewhat better than wheat straw, and either kind of straw considerably better than shavings. The amount of animal excreta saved in the test with each kind of bedding was just about the same, but the straw in straw-bedded manure is considered to have as much fertility value, pound for pound, as manure, while shavings have little or no value. They are so much inert material.

The amount of bedding required and the fertilizer value of the manure saved are of course, not the only criteria of the value of a bedding material. On an ordinary farm they are most important, but under some conditions the cleanliness of the animals is the first consideration, and under some the freedom of the bedding material from weed seeds is an important factor. It is here that shavings and wheat straw have an advantage. Shavings kept the animals, especially cattle, noticeably cleaner than either wheat straw or oat straw. Wheat straw was somewhat better than oat straw in this respect. Shavings again have an advantage in being entirely free from weed seeds. Straw, and especially oat straw, may be a carrier of a variety of weeds.

Sizing up the whole situation, the bedding materials rank oat straw, wheat straw, and shavings in economy of amount required to keep animals bedded, and in the value of the manure produced, but the rank is just the reverse in efficacy in keeping animals clean and in freedom from weed seed.

J. W. Whisenand.

Working Brood Mares in Pairs

A brood mare in harness makes extra work and bother for the driver when nursing a foal. Some time is lost dealing with the youngster and humoring the mare. Two mares together are better than one for the reason that the two foals are raised with little if any more trouble than is caused by one alone.

If two mares with foals are together that pair can be kept at work which leaves them handy for bringing to the barn in the middle of each half day while the foals are small. Some other team can be sent on the long trip that keeps the outfit away from home from morning until night. It is hard on a foal to have the mare gone all day, and it is a tedious task to milk the mare out at noon.

If a man plans to raise one foal next year he might just as well plan for two if he has another mare that he can breed. On farms where a number of mares are kept there is little trouble about it. The mares that settle and produce foals may be worked together in pairs, threes or fours as the work may require from time to time. Then the best man with foals may have charge of them. Handled in that way, the foals make so little extra work, that the field operations are not appreciably disturbed. Generally among several men there is one who would prefer attending to the mares with foals because of the interest he would take in seeing the little fellows thrive.

The usual suckling period is five months during the busiest time of the year. Toward weaning time the foals take care of themselves very well if turned to feed and water, and frequent nursing is unnecessary. Counting up cost of management for the whole time it is really almost nothing if the mares are paired off with each other and given stable and paddock accommodations convenient for handling them and their foals.—Breeders' Gazette.

Four Cows and a \$10,000 Hide!

There's a farmer in Ohio whose name is Peter Small. Peter Small made a mighty big mistake a few years ago. The mistake cost him over \$10,000! And all he has to show for it is a bump of experience and a lifeless hide.

Peter Small will never make the same mistake again.

Peter Small did not swallow his loss, and selfishly keep his story to himself. He was big enough to tell the dairy world, so that you and I and others would not lose as he had lost. He took his hide to the National Dairy Show last year and told the story of his mistake.

In the Peter Small exhibit there were five stalls. Four contained cows placidly chewing their cuds. In the fifth there hung the hide of the bull that had sired these cows. He had been slaughtered before Peter Small knew what his daughters could do. That was Peter Small's mistake.

He knows now. He kept a record of his cows after the bull was killed. He found out that they averaged 25,210 pounds of milk and 977.3 pounds of butterfat! And he had killed the bull that had sired them! He had killed for meat a bull that was worth at least \$10,000. He had found that out too late. It was a lesson in cow testing that cost Peter Small \$10,000.

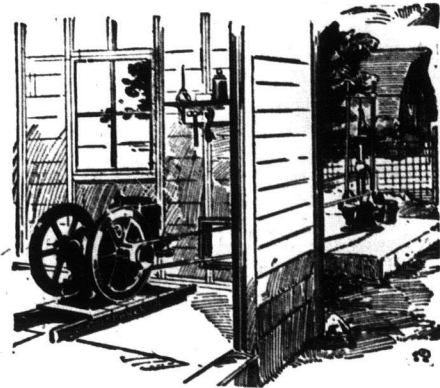
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