Farm Experiences

This page contains letters from farmers, telling their experiences along different lines of everyday farm work. We want to make this page one of The Guide's weekly features, but we can only do so with the help of our readers. We believe actual experiences from practical farmers form the most valuable kind of reading matter we can give our readers. Do you? If you do you can help us, and at the same time help some neighbor, by writing a letter telling of anything you have learned on the farm this year. Perhaps you have followed some new system that has given better results or even been a failure. Write so that we can let some brother farmer profit by your experience. This week one reader tells how he made $14 per head on steers, and another how he cleans land of wild oats. Both experiences are money-makers in their separate ways. How are you farming to make money? All the letters we publish are paid for at our regular rate. As soon as work becomes a little slacker write about some of your experiences to The Grain Growers' Guide, Winnipeg, Man.

CLEANING UP WILD OATS

There are a great many ways in which to rid a field of wild oats. I often see in many papers people asking the question. My experience with this pest has proved very satisfactory on the kind of land we have here. Of course the ease with which wild oats can be got rid of greatly depends on the nature of the soil. The land that I have is a medium black, sandy soil, very easily worked. Plows or any implement will clean in it no matter how loose. I came to this farm in the fall of 1914 and found it to be badly infested with wild oats. I skim plowed thirty acres very light, harrowed once and packed once. When I was plowing I could scrape them up with my hand in places. So the next spring as soon as I could get on the land I put the disc on the land and got it warmed up early. The wild oats came up as thick as anything could grow. On May 20 I plowed them down and sowed barley. The barley was a great crop, going fifty bushels to the acre, and no wild oats. I think this field will be in fine shape for wheat another year.

Man. C. H.

MAKING $14 A HEAD ON STEERS

In contributing this article to the readers of The Guide, I do not wish to force my methods on the attention of others engaged in farming. However, I have had some experience in feeding steers on a small scale and I have kept a close record of results, so I am writing this hoping that those who contemplate feeding steers, who have not had any previous experience, may find some helpful suggestions that may be used to advantage by them.

The bunch that I fed last winter consisted of nine head of two-year-old steers (coming three). They were a good average bunch of grade Shorthorns and were all pail fed calves except one, which was allowed to suck the cow. I raised seven of these and bought one calf seven months old for $16 and another yearling for $30. They were put in the feed yard November 1, 1915, and were fed prairie hay and chop. The chop was wheat and oats mixed, half and half. They were given:

3 pounds each per day the first two weeks.
4 pounds each per day the next two weeks.
6 pounds each per day the next two weeks.
8 pounds each per day the 7th and 8th weeks.
10 pounds each per day the 9th and 10th weeks.
12 pounds each per day for the rest of the time that they were fed, which was six weeks—making four months in all.

I might say here that 12 pounds per head per day is rather too much for two-year-old steers, especially if the weather be changeable or warm. I experienced some difficulty last winter with my steers going off their feed after I had reached 12 pounds apiece, due, I think, to a week of thawing weather in February. These steers were fed hay and chop twice a day—morning and evening—and if one of the steers refused to eat, his allowance was taken back so that the rest only got their own allowance. They had free access to salt and water. A tank heater was used and ice was not allowed to form on the water during the day. An open shed was provided, which allowed them to go in and out as they liked. This was simply a frame made of poles and covered with straw. They were fed outside both hay and grain. The chop was fed in a box 12 feet long and 3 feet wide. This box is large enough for twelve to fifteen steers that are dehorned. Of course, steers with horns require much more room.

I have tried timothy hay for steers, but I do not like it. They do not eat it as well as wild hay, and I have found that it has a tendency to scour them. I have also tried green feed—green oat bundles—for starting the steers off. I fed this for three weeks with prairie hay, but I could not see that the steers made any gain while eating it, altho they liked the green feed and consumed a large quantity of it. This lot of nine steers was put in the feed yard November 1, 1915, and sold March 1, 1916—valued at $55 each in November by our local cattle buyer. They ate:

12 tons of prairie hay at $4 per ton	$ 48.00
8,544 pounds chop at 1¼ cents per pound	106.80
Value of nine steers at $55 each	495.00
	$649.80

They sold for:

Nine steers, average weight when sold 1,222½ pounds. 1,222½ x 9 equals 11,000 pounds at 7 cents per pound	$770.00
Total cost as shown above	649.80
Net gain (four months)	$120.20

We had a small scale in the granary and every feed was weighed out to the steers and set down on a chart made for the purpose. The hay was measured in the stack. This makes a return of almost $14 a head.

Ponoka, Alta. F. S. J.

The old oaken bucket. It's artistic, but not in it with a concrete well tank and windmill. There is no labor saver on a farm equal to the latter.

CO-OPERATION'S BENEFITS

At the beginning of the year 1915 the farmers of this district were unorganized. Every farmer dealt individually, and in consequence he was imposed upon whenever opportunity offered. Early in the year, however, the farmers, feeling the need of co-operation in their undertakings, organized a branch of the S.G.G.A., and at the first meeting a very encouraging start was made.

Owing to local conditions which prevailed in this district at that time we were unable to purchase in bulk from our Central in Moose Jaw. Therefore, early in the life of the association, a committee was appointed to make arrangements for the purchasing of all lines of supplies for our members. In this matter the committee was very successful. Merchants who were indifferent where the trade of a single farmer was concerned became very anxious to secure the trade of a solid community and gladly offered us a discount of 10 per cent. off all purchases at regular retail prices in return for the support of the association. This acted as a stimulant for new members to join, with the result that at the end of our first year we had a membership of almost sixty.

Each member was at least fifty dollars to the good by joining the organization. Locals who are similarly situated to us and find it difficult on account of not having a warehouse to deal with the Central, would do well to make similar arrangements with their local merchants. It would be the means of keeping the association a live issue and would greatly help to increase the membership. This is only one instance, and many more could be cited, where co-operation has benefited the farmers of this district.

Sask. A. J. McQ.

SUCCESSFUL WITH MARQUIS

From experience I am firmly convinced that the early ripening Marquis wheat is the only dependable wheat to sow, as far as wet weather or early frost are concerned, and henceforth I shall sow only Marquis unless some new kind of wheat is put on the market that proves better. Four years ago, when practically all the Red Fife and other kinds of wheat in Western Canada were more or less frozen, I came to the conclusion that if grain growing was to be a success, as far as early frosts were concerned, it would be necessary to have an earlier ripening wheat. When Marquis was first put on the market in this part of the country I was one of the first to try it. I paid $1.25 per bushel for seed to be used on twenty-five acres of summer-fallow. Most of my neighbors did not think much of this venture and said Red Fife was good enough for them. My patch yielded 40 bushels per acre that year, but as we had an ordinary year it did not ripen very much earlier than the Fife. The next year—the dry year—any kind of wheat ripened plenty early enough. But last year (1915) it came to the test, and Marquis wheat came thru with flying colors. The last week in August you could tell from afar every field of Marquis in the district. It was practically all standing up, looking yellow and ripe, ready for the binder, while the Red Fife, especially on summer-fallow, was mostly down flat on the ground and green as grass. At that time it certainly looked bad for the farmers with nothing but Fife. But as luck would have it, the following week turned warm and was free from showers and gave the Fife a chance to catch up. But the grain that was down stayed down and had to be cut one way, a tedious job, and lots of grain was left on the ground as the binder went right over it. Then when about half the Fife was cut we had a bad frost that froze all there was standing or laying and some in the stooks. The final result was that Marquis wheat graded No. 1, while the frozen Fife was graded from No. 2 to No. 5. Of course last year was an exceptional year, and it's true that Red Fife would be all right in ordinary years. But it is also true that no farmer can predict in the spring what kind of a season we are going to have, and if wheat growing is to be a dependable business in this country of early frosts, it certainly behooves every farmer to sow wheat that can be depended on to beat the early frost. Of course we may lose our crops from other causes, but as far as frost goes in Southern Alberta, if Marquis wheat is sowed just as soon as the ground, that has been prepared the year previous, can be harrowed and drilled there will be little danger of frosted wheat.

JOHN GLAMBECK.

Milo, Sask.

HANDLING BARBED WIRE

Last year I read in The Guide about the method of letting out barbed wire by means of a crowbar on top of a wagon box. I have used it for years, but it sometimes gives trouble when turning and on uneven ground. So when we were to fence a half-section last year we fixed up the following device to let out two wires at once.

We made two hardwood sticks to go thru the spools, flattening them a little on one end to fit into the oblong holes made in two pieces of staves of an old barrel. The sticks and holes are made oblong to prevent the sticks from turning. The pieces of staves we nailed to the bottom of a wagon box with two-inch nails. Then we made a board with two holes in it to fit over the sticks, loosened

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Berkshire boar, showing remarkable Berkshire type and strength.