

Sawdust as a Litter.

(Experimental Farms Note.)

The amount and value of manure produced on the farm is in a measure dependent on the nature and supply of the litter used. For the purpose of a litter is not only to act as a bedding material, to keep the animal warm, dry and comfortable, but also to serve as an absorbent to take up and hold all the liquid excreta—the most valuable part of the manure.

Straw is the universal litter and there are few better but there are seasons in which the supply is short and it may then be advantageously supplemented with sawdust. Indeed used alone dry sawdust is quite satisfactory. It is clean and easily handled but is particularly valuable for its high absorbent power for liquids, which is two to three times that of ordinary straw, it is not rich in plant food constituents but its subsequent decomposition in the soil gives rise to much humus—forming material. It should be used in sufficient quantity to absorb completely all the urine.

There is a more or less general impression among farmers that manure from stables and cowbarns in which sawdust had been used as a litter is injurious to the land. While we would not say that this suspicion may not have some foundation we have never been able to discover a single instance of such injury and enquiry has been made both in Canada and the United States in this matter. Such injury could only occur on very light soils following very heavy applications. Most satisfactory evidence has been obtained from many farms upon which sawdust has been used as a bedding material for a number of years and upon which the soil is light and sandy. Naturally it is on heavy soils that this class of manure proves most effective.

One word of caution is necessary, horse manure from stables using sawdust heats very rapidly, especially if left in the pile, and the excessive fermentation that may take place will seriously injure the manure. Such manure should be mixed with that from the cowbarn, which can readily be managed when manure carriers are installed and a manure spreader used. Mixed manure (horse and cow) may be handled in the same manner as that made with straw. The saturation of the sawdust with the liquid excreta promotes the ready decomposition of the litter under favorable conditions of temperature and the best place for this to take place, in order that the full manurial effect may be obtained, is in the soil. If the manure cannot be spread at once, the heap should be kept moist and compact, as in the case of manure made with straw.

The sawdust of hardwoods, decomposes more readily and further is richer in potash and phosphoric acid than that of pines and conifers generally, but no harm due to resistance to decay need be feared from the use of the latter provided that it is not employed in larger quantity than is sufficient to absorb and retain the liquid excreta.—FRANK T. SAUITT, Dominion Chemist.

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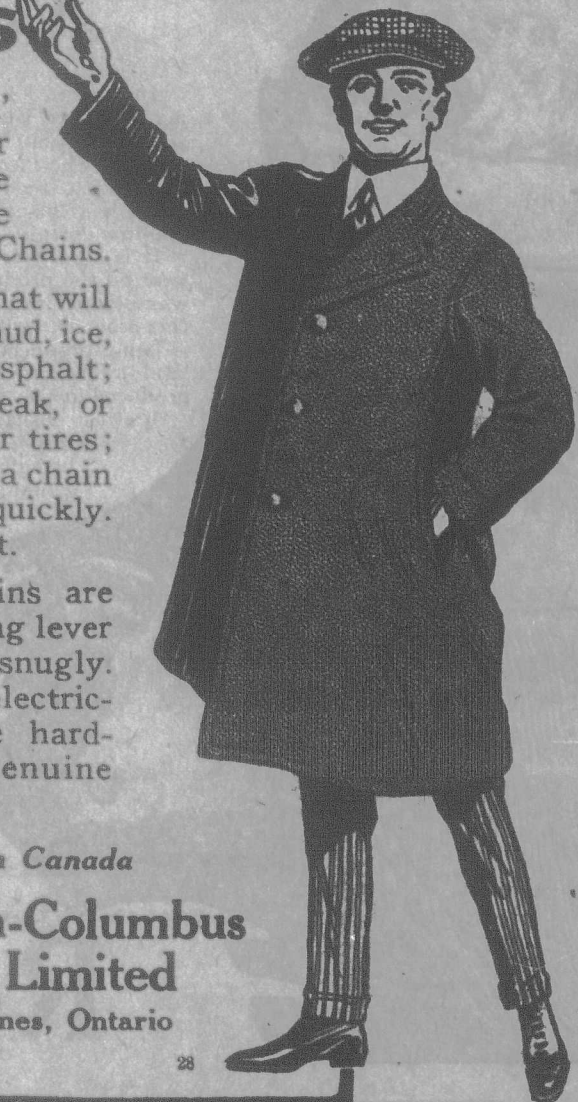
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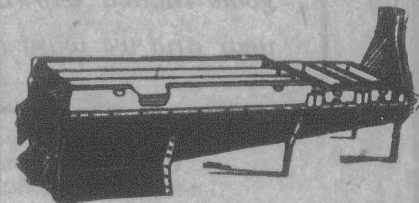
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