

CP 2 1000-311
1200

ALFALFA GROWING IN EASTERN CANADA

BY

M. O. MALTE, Ph.D.

Preparation of the Land, Seed and Seeding, Treatment of Crop the First Year.

Introduction.

Long before the Christian era the merits of alfalfa were recognized by those people in the Old World who had to rely for their prosperity or even their existence on success in animal husbandry. In Central and Southern Asia, the home of alfalfa, no other plant was more highly esteemed as a forage plant. That this is true is indicated by its name, "Alfalfa" being derived from the Arabic "Alfalacah," which means "The Best Kind of Fodder."

Alfalfa has been cultivated for at least two thousand five hundred years, always holding its place as one of the best of fodder plants ever known.

In Canada it has been grown for at least fifty years, but it is only of late that its superior qualities have been fully realized and that, as a consequence, its growing has become more general.

Feeding Value.

All kinds of farm animals like alfalfa and thrive upon it. It furnishes an exceedingly nutritious, wholesome and much relished food, be it given to the animals in the green state or as hay.

For Dairy Cows alfalfa is particularly valuable. For milk production, alfalfa pasture is worth more than any pasture composed of clover and grasses. As a soiling crop it cannot be surpassed, and well cured alfalfa hay has no equal as a dry fodder.

For Sheep, Lambs and Hogs alfalfa is also exceedingly valuable, its fattening- and flesh producing qualities being universally recognized.

Horses are very fond of it and thrive remarkably well on it.

Fertilizing Value.

Like all other legumes, including clovers, peas and vetches, alfalfa has the property of enriching the soil with nitrogen gained from the air. It also adds large quantities of humus to the soil through dead leaves and decaying roots. Thus alfalfa not only improves the mechanical condition of the soil, but also increases its fertility.

SOILS.

Alfalfa is a perennial plant with a vigorous root system which penetrates the soil to a great depth in search of food. Thus a fair proportion of the food needed for the growth of the plant is taken from the subsoil.

To ensure the best results, i.e., to ensure vigorous growth and heavy crops for many consecutive years, alfalfa should therefore be grown on land with a deep, rich, open and porous subsoil, easily penetrable to the roots to a depth of at least two or three feet.

Hardpan or impenetrable clay near the surface will prevent the roots from developing properly and, as a result, seriously check the growth and yielding capacity of the crop.

Water standing near the surface has the same effect. As a matter of fact, alfalfa is very sensitive to an excess of water in the ground. It does exceedingly well in a

DOMINION EXPERIMENTAL FARMS.

J. H. GRISDALE, B.Agr.,
Director.

M. O. MALTE, Ph. D.
Dominion Agrostologist.

EXHIBITION CIRCULAR No. 56.

(January, 1916.)

91180

