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## HOW TO PROVIDE A FORAGE CROP WHEN MEADOWS FAIL TO CATCH

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### Causes of Bad Catches Discussed. Suggestions Offered as to Mixtures That Can be Seeded to Supplement the Hay Crop of This Year. Late Sown Mixtures the Best

FROM all parts of the country, one year or another, come complaints of meadows being frozen out, or of there being but a poor stand of grass or clover, the winter once over. The causes of this condition are various. Sometimes they are evident, but very frequently one is at a loss to understand why certain fields have lost the whole stand of grass or clover.

The trouble usually lies in the defective catch the preceding spring, due to imperfect preparation, insufficient seeding, too heavy a nurse crop, or the improper covering of the seed once it has been sown. As a rule the meadow depends for its success upon the condition of the soil and the care in sowing at the time of seeding down. Too great attention cannot be paid to the preparation of the soil at this time; a good firm seed bed, with a fine surface mulch in which the grass seed sinks to a reasonable depth, say half an inch or thereabouts, and wherefrom the moisture, although apparently near the top, does not escape freely carried off by every bright sunny day or breezy night.

#### ADDITIONAL PRECAUTIONS

In addition to the precautions taken at seeding time, care should be taken not to sow too heavy a nurse crop and after harvest to order up a plentiful supply of rain. If this cannot be done, as will probably be found to be the case, then rolling the stubble is found to be a useful precaution; anything to break the crust and so conserve the moisture already in the soil from further loss by rapid evaporation on account of the nurse crop having been removed. Where the stand is feeble, due to any of the preceding causes, the treatment outlined will sometimes help it.

If the stand is very light, it would, in many parts of Ontario, be found profitable to scratch in a light seeding of timothy and clover, say three or four pounds of each to the acre, immediately after harvest. A light dressing of straw manure in the fall will help matters very materially by protecting the plants from autumn frosts, by holding the snow on the higher parts of the meadow and by affording protection, in some measure at least, against alternate thawing and freezing, during the late winter and early spring.

In spite of all precautions, however, meadows will here and there be found looking bare in the spring. It is not wise to condemn them until after a nice warm rain and a few days of bright sunshine have come along to give the feeble stand a fair start, and so let it show up to the best advantage. If, in spite of every inducement to grow, nothing worth while comes along, then action is necessary if any satisfactory returns are desired from the field this year and for the next two or three years as well, since any break in the rotation at this juncture is a serious matter. Before taking any action careful consideration

should be given to the requirements of not only this season, but the next, so far as forage crops are concerned. If the field can be treated as best suits the field, and without reference to the forage crop requirements of the farm, then the best plan is to grow some hood crop on the field and get the soil into good shape for seeding down to grass the succeeding year. If, however, a hay crop of some kind is required off the field



Serving the Noon Day Meal to His Favorites

Mr. W. G. Rennie is here shown amongst some of his chickens hatched last year. Note the size of these birds as they were photographed on June 30, 1911. This York Co., Ont., farmer, has as nice a flock of pure-bred Buff Orpingtons as one would care to see.

—Photo by an editor of Farm and Dairy

this year, then its treatment will have to depend upon the convenience of the owner as to time of working.

#### EARLY SEEDING CROPS

If it is possible to work the land early, then several alternatives present themselves, by way of crops suitable for hay:

(a) Oats, four bushels an acre, cut in the milk stage.

(b) Oats, wheat and barley, equal parts, three bushels an acre, cut in early milk stage.

(c) Oats and peas, mixed, equal parts by weight, sown three and a half bushels an acre.

(d) Oats, vetches, two parts oats to one part vetches, sown three bushels an acre.

(e) Oats, peas and vetches, three parts oats to one part each of peas and vetches, sown three bushels an acre.

#### LATE SEEDING CROPS

If, however, early seeding is inconvenient or impossible, then later treatment, which by the way is probably the most likely to give good results, may be given, and the field sown down to Hungarian Grass, say 45 or 50 pounds to the acre, during the last days of June; or to one of the millets at a somewhat lighter seeding, sown about the same time. In seeding to either Hungarian grass or millet, very careful and very thorough preparation of the soil is necessary, and the seed should be sown only when the soil is in a nice

moist condition, very fine on the surface and fairly firm in the bottom.

Millets and Hungarian grass must be cut when just coming into head to be of much value. In the case of an early seeding with the oats or other grain mixtures, and also in the case of the late seeding, with the Hungarian Grass or Millet, if these later crops can be cut before the middle of August, it will often be found satisfactory to seed down to grass and clover after the hay crops have been harvested. Providing the field is fairly free from weeds, a good plan is to disk harrow lengthwise and across, sow to grass and clover, harrow, roll and harrow, then with fairly favorable weather conditions, a satisfactory stand can, very frequently, be counted upon for the next year.

#### CORN SORGHUM, RAPE

As a crop to be handled half-way between the early sown crops as outlined above and the late sown crops, that is millet, Hungarian grass, etc., soiling crops such as corn sorghum and rape might come in. These are especially to be recommended in case a field is not just as clean as it might be. Their use, however, precludes the possibility of the field being seeded down to grass the same year to provide for a hay crop the next year. It is sometimes recommended that grass and clover should be sown with the oats and other grain mixtures to be cut for hay. Such seeding is, however, usually a waste of effort and material.

None of the plans outlined above are absolutely satisfactory, but they are the lines of action that have proven least objectionable in our experience here, when, fortunately, is not very extensive. By carefully observing the requirements of successful grass seeding and the proper handling of the catch or stand after the grain has been removed when necessary, it is only once in a long time that we have had any trouble of this kind.

**A Farmer's Opinion.**—Perhaps it is because we farmers live in more isolation than our city brethren, and hence have more time to think that we are not so easily reached by false economic doctrines as are the working masses of the city. Our comparative freedom from economic delusions is illustrated by the stand that all of our farmers' organizations have taken on the tariff question. We realize that for a nation such as Canada to try to lift itself into prosperity by the protective tariff is similar to a man trying to lift himself over a six-rail fence by his boot straps — and about as likely to be successful. — E. F. Eaton, Colchester Co., N. S.

I have never attempted to winter sheep without roots. Ensilage affords a substitute, and may be used with good results if fed carefully. Without roots, sheep should have access to water and not be compelled to eat snow. The great advantage of roots is the salutory effect they have on the digestive organs. I should suggest in the absence of roots, the use of a small quantity of ground flax as an aid to digestion and thrift. — J. B. Spencer, B.S.A., Ottawa, Ont.