

Farm Experiences and Problems

Practical Suggestions and Opinions on Everyday Farm Work

ADVICE TO THE NEW SETTLER.

The spring of 1917 will see many men making their first start as independent farmers on the prairie. Many of them are coming from other parts of Canada or from the United States. Very many have had but limited experience of Western agriculture. Such men are anxious to benefit by the accumulated experience of those who have lived many years in the West. Even to those who have done considerable practical farming a short summary, containing the gist of that experience, should be welcome. It was with the idea of securing a budget of reliable information and advice for the beginner that a representative of The Guide called upon Mr. Angus McKay, whose long experience of western conditions, and thorough knowledge of prairie farming, gained as superintendent of the Experimental Farm at Indian Head, qualifies him as few men in the West to counsel the man who is just starting on new or partly improved land.

Flax and Oats for a Start

"The inexperienced settler or the young man just starting up on a new or partly improved half-section," said Mr. McKay, "should choose land with from twelve to twenty inches of clay loam with clay subsoil and with water available. Rose bushes indicate good wheat land. The equipment he would require would be two or three horses, plow, harrows, wagon, drill and binder for the first year if flax or oats are sown. During his first summer it is best for him to erect a house and stable in April; break for flax and oats early in May; cultivate and sow the land as soon as broken, and break the latter part of May and all of June for his next year's crop."

"The young man could do with very little the first year," continued Mr. McKay, "I think flax is a good crop to start with—ten or fifteen acres of it; he should not overdo it. This gives him a little money in the fall. It is the only crop he can be sure of the first year. It is not wise for him to go too fast at first. He can raise potatoes and vegetables, of course, and if he had a few hens it would be an advantage. Supposing he had a thousand dollars, he could put in about twenty acres of flax and say ten acres of oats. Flax is the surest crop he can grow under such circumstances. Oats often is a fair crop, but not much should be risked. Forty pounds of seed should be sown to the acre for flax and two bushels of oats. After the first year the flax should be dropped."

Backsetting Advisable

Asked his opinion regarding the breaking and cultivation of virgin prairie, Mr. McKay stated that the best plan was to break three inches deep in June. Breaking and backsetting gave the best and surest results. To form a good seedbed this breaking should be rolled or packed as the breaking was done. It should be disked when the grass starts and again in the fall. If the settler grew a crop on spring breaking he should summer-fallow the following year. If he took no crop off the first year and seeded his breaking the second season he should figure on seeding wheat when the frost is out of the ground, two inches deep, in April. No previous cultivation is necessary before seeding. Formalin should be used to treat seed for smut and this should not be neglected. Seed should be provided at the rate of a bushel and a half to the acre, sown two inches deep. After cutting this grain the settler should leave the stubble and burn it. Plowing for oats or barley should be done in the spring, from one to two inches deeper than the breaking. Both harrows and packer should follow right after the plow.

If no cattle are raised, one-third of the cultivated land should be summer-fallowed each year; if cattle are raised, part of the land should be seeded down for hay and pasture.

Should Livestock Be Kept?

"It is not advisable for the settler to keep stock the first year, but certainly O.K. after that," said Mr. McKay, when questioned on this point. "The milking strain of Shorthorns is the best. In the matter of feed for winter forage prairie wool hay is usually available on new land. Oats make good winter feed if cut on the green side. The reason it is not advisable to attempt keeping stock the first year is that the new settler will have so much

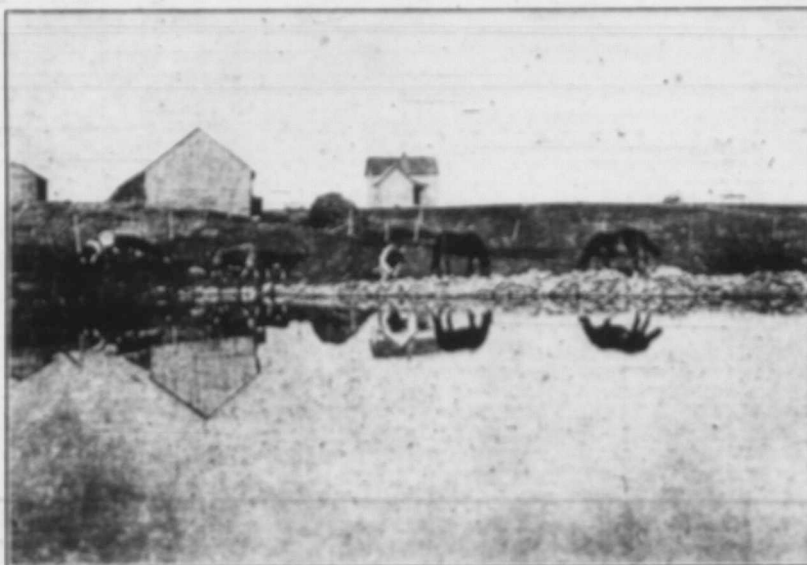
other work to do getting up his buildings, breaking his land, etc., that he will scarcely have time for stock. There is no objection to a cow, of course."

Mr. McKay considers that the best grasses for hay are western rye grass or timothy; for pasture, western rye. The stubble land should be plowed in May and fifteen lbs. of western rye grass seed should be sown to the acre. Timothy requires eight lbs. to the acre. When mixed, twelve pounds of western rye and three lbs. of timothy should be sown. The seed should be sown in a drill box and not with the grain. Alfalfa should be sown alone—twelve to fifteen lbs. per acre. "Good cultural methods and seed selection," concluded Mr. McKay, "should increase the average yield of all grains throughout Western Canada by from five to eight bushels."

MAKING A PLANK DRAG

A year ago you published articles by Seager Wheeler and described a plank drag to level with before seeding. I would like to know what length to make one for three and also for four horses, what width between planks and the correct angle of drag in use. Would 45 degrees do? How would a combination do, that is, the planks to stand on made to be used as a pulverizing drag?

Does it make wheat later maturing if harrowed when just showing thru, providing one used lever harrows, with the teeth slanted backwards, so



On the Farm of Stanley Moxness, Brock, Sask.

This dam was built in a ravine which crosses the farm and is very useful in supplying water to the stock and threshing rigs. They can also cut ice from it in winter. The stones were taken from the fields before breaking and the dirt was scraped in with two teams, taking two weeks' time. It can yet be raised a few feet.

as not to thin the stand?—A. H., Canwood, Sask.

Answer

It is not advisable to make the plank drag longer than 9 or 10 feet for several reasons. When wider it will not do satisfactory work, particularly if the surface of the ground is ridged. Such may be the case even when apparently it is level. By drawing the drag at an angle of about 45 degrees, it will offset this to some extent.

The combination drag your correspondent had reference to is not necessary as the plank drag is not intended to pulverize the soil, but to level the surface, excepting on new breaking that has just been disced. It is not good practice to pulverize the soil (unless in special circumstances) as this will cause the soil to drift. A plank drag that pulverizes the soil grains or crushes them to dust should not be used on the ordinary prairie soil. We do not want a dust mulch so much as a granular mulch.

The plank drag, set on edge, as I recommend, is for the purpose of shaving the soil, and filling up all depressions, which is done by rolling the soil lumps along the front edge of the drag instead of floating over the surface, reducing the soil to a fine dust, as is done by the plan of the drag your correspondent suggests, which would really be a float. Again, in the plan submitted the cross bar is too close to the ground and will prevent the soil moving along the front side of the drag, and will fill up inside of the drag. The cross piece connecting the two sides of a drag should be placed as near the top edge of the drag as possible to allow the soil to pass freely. The plank drag I recommend will do excellent and better work on soddy ground than the float.

With respect to harrowing grain when it is just

about to come thru the ground, that is the best stage at which to do effective work, and will rather hasten maturity than retard it, by reason of the cultivation given at that time. It will retard maturity if harrowed when an inch to four or six inches above the ground when in single leaf stage. It may be harrowed again when it is stooling. Any ordinary harrow may be used just as it is showing thru the soil. In fact I would recommend setting the teeth straight at this time rather than sloping them.—Seager Wheeler.

FEEDING AND BREEDING LAMBS

At the recent stock show held at Denver the champion load of lambs of the show were sold by Clay Robinson at the record price of 25 cents per lb., a price only approached by the champion lambs at the last International at Chicago that were exhibited by the Butterfield Livestock Co., Weiser, Ida., at 21½ cents per lb. The lambs that set the new high price were fed by Bruce Eaton, Eaton, Colo., who wrote the following for the February issue of the American Sheep Breeder.

"These lambs were all registered Southdowns from the original stock I bought of Charles Leet & Sons, Mantua, Ohio. They were ten months old when sold and weighed 91 lbs., bringing 25 cents per lb. As soon as they would eat grain I let them run thru creepers for about three months, after which their mothers and the lambs were turned on a slough grass pasture with quite a lot of sweet clover. This being the driest year that Colorado had ever seen, the pasture was nothing extra. They were taken away from their mothers September 1 and put in the feed lots. I started them on rolled barley and alfalfa, fed in a self-feeder, but the alfalfa was not cut or ground; their feed ration was gradually raised and at the end of thirty days they were eating a pound per head. We then switched the feed from rolled barley to whole barley and raised them up gradually to a pound and three quarters per day, being fed morning and evening, also alfalfa hay was fed to them with their meals. They had access to running seepage water at all times. They were held on this feed until two weeks before the Denver show, when we switched to whole corn, as we could not get the whole barley at the Denver show. We shipped to Denver, January 17 and held them in open pens and they did not fill very well and they should have weighed about 95 lbs. These lambs were fed by a man who had never fed a sheep before in his life, and I can only say this, that the main secret is good foundation stuff to start with. In four years I have always had the grand championship load and also won in the carcass contest."

SYSTEM AND STANDARDIZING

Last year when the farmer went in haste for repairs to the local implement dealer he could not supply his wants at once. In many cases he had to wait a week before the piece came and in others the required parts could not be obtained.

The implement agents claimed that the manufacturers were manufacturing munitions in place of repairs as they found it more profitable and the agent could not obtain a line of supplies.

I believe that some agents devoted too much time and money to the selling of automobiles, the result being that they could not or did not arrange for an adequate supply of repairs for farm implements.

The dealer could assist the farmer by putting forth every effort to secure a large supply of repairs, early in the season. It would sometimes save time if a printed list of supplies on hand were posted in the office.

I have gone for a repair and have had to wait a long time because the dealer did not seem to know just where various parts of his stock were placed.

The mail order house could help the farmer by having repairs on hand and not being compelled to send to the factory when orders were received.

The farmer can assist the agent in many ways. First, he should look over his machinery and discover the parts that are weak or worn. If he would take a list of these parts to the agent it might help the agent to serve him promptly when needs arose. The farmer might secure all these parts this winter and he would have a pleasant feeling of

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