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A STORY OF MY SEVEN YEARS' ALFALFA EXPERIENCE*

Walter H. Bowley, Middlesex Co., Ont.

Why I Started to Grow Alfalfa. Some of my Early Mistakes. A full description of my Methods of Harvesting Alfalfa Hay that is Palatable and Appreciated by the Stock.

MY experience in growing and feeding alfalfa dates back over a period of seven years. At that time I read several articles written by Mr. Hy. Glendinning on alfalfa culture. Previous to that I had been almost always short of hay for the stock I kept. I decided to try six acres in alfalfa. I can assure Farm and Dairy readers that I have had most gratifying returns.

I seeded my first six acres of alfalfa alone without any nurse crop as I was anxious to secure a good stand. I made the mistake of seeding only 12 pounds of seed an acre. The seed I secured on this occasion was two years old—another mistake. For a long time it looked as if I were going to get nothing but weeds instead of a catch of alfalfa. But after a while the alfalfa started, and the land being in splendid condition, it certainly did start.

AN END TO THE WEEDS

About the last of August, following Mr. Glendinning's advice again, we clipped the field, which prevented all weeds from going to seed. This clipping gave the alfalfa a fresh start, so that when winter came we had a good stand of alfalfa with a good top to protect it from frost.

The next year I expected great returns from my alfalfa. In one way I got them; in another way I did not. From that six acres, if I remember rightly, I cut between 25 and 30 tons in three cuttings; but being green at the job I again made several mistakes.

The first cutting I did not cut soon enough, and it got very coarse and woody. The second cutting I cut about the right time, but tried to save it without coking, with the result that I lost nearly all the leaves. And the third cutting I put in a little too green. And the third musty; in fact some of it was white with mildew when I started to feed it in the fall.

I next seeded 10 acres more, which made 16 acres in all, and in 1909 we secured in two cuttings 60 tons of as good hay as ever was fed to a dairy cow.

READY FOR ANOTHER CROP

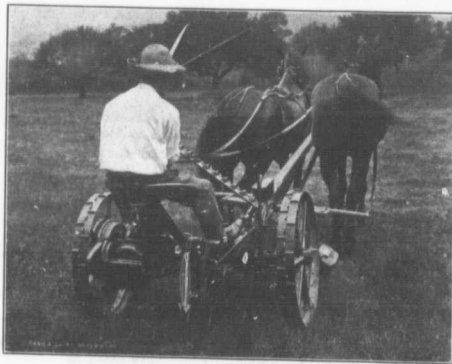
In 1910 I gave the same field a good coat of manure and prepared it for corn. The fall after keeping the corn field clean (which I tried hard to do) I did not plow the field at all, but the

Mr. Bowley, the writer of this article, was a successful competitor in one of the early Prize Farms Competitions conducted by Farm and Dairy. His first home was illustrated in Farm and Dairy a few months ago.

following spring worked it with cultivator, disk and harrow until there was an extra fine seed bed. I then sowed one bushel of barley as a nurse crop for our alfalfa with not less than 20 lbs. of alfalfa seed an acre.

I cannot get alfalfa too thick. The thicker it is the finer it is; and the finer it is the better it is. Seeded so thick and on well prepared land one is almost sure of a good catch of alfalfa.

The harvesting of alfalfa seems to be a difficult



The Very Latest Thing in Hay-making Machinery

Mr. S. M. Martin, Heatherdale, P. E. I., has just perfected the attachable hay tedder seen in the illustration. This tedder which loosens up the hay as soon as it is cut thereby quickening the curing, can be attached to any of our common makes of mowers. This photo was taken when the tedder was being given one of its first trials.

proposition; especially to those who do not grow it. As I have given you my first year's experience, you can readily see it was certainly a difficult proposition then for me. And it really does require a little experience before it can be done right. The last few years I have had splendid results, and I will try to give you our method as nearly as possible.

Having 16 acres to cut I like to start as soon as I can so that if we get a bad spell of weather the last will not get too far advanced before it is cut. I do not wait for the field to get one-tenth in bloom before I start. I start as soon as I can see an odd flower here and there. I always start on the highest part of the field first as it always flowers first. If I wait till the lower portion of the field is one-tenth in bloom, the hills will be all in bloom and the hay will therefore be too woody when cut.

I start to cut as soon as the dew is off in the morning, usually cutting about four acres at a time. As soon as the mower has had a good start I start the tedder going, and keep it going almost until it is fit to cok. I ted four or five times. I would suggest here: Don't try making alfalfa hay without a tedder, for if it is at all heavy it cannot be done. The leaves on the top will drop off before the hay underneath is fit to cok.

If it has been a dry, hot day, the alfalfa will be fit to cok the same evening as it was cut. If it is not well wilted I leave it until the next morning and ted it again.

COOK ALL CUTTINGS

I believe it will pay any man to cok not only the first cutting but every cutting. I do not allow my men to roll it in heaps and call that coking. Each forkful should be picked

up separately and put on top of each other making a small stack that will be practically waterproof. Then a week's rain will hardly hurt it at all, excepting the very outside of the cok.

If I do get a spell of rainy weather I consider it advisable to move the coks on to fresh ground to prevent the smothering of the plants underneath. This can be quickly done if two men work together. First we take one forkful off the top of cok and then both men put their forks in the same side of the cok and slide or pull it on to a fresh track; then replace the top forkful as before.

WHEN TO DRAW IN ALFALFA

To tell just when alfalfa is fit to draw in is the part that needs a little experience. After the cok has finished heating take a handful out of the centre and bring it with your hands. If you can wring some juices out, it is not quite fit. If you can not it will be all right to draw in.

For the first cutting it will take from four days to a week, depending on the weather, size of the coks, etc.

When putting my hay in the mow I do not put eight or 10 loads in the centre and leave it there, I spread it as it is put in, and I can assure you if this method is followed you will be well pleased in the winter when you are feeding it to your stock.

One point I have missed: Alfalfa will smother and kill, I believe, any kind of noxious weeds and grasses. I have seen and proven on my fields that alfalfa will smother and kill quack grass. I know of nothing else that will do that but a bonfire, where quack grass has once got a proper start.

Almost any of the coal tar dips is satisfactory for lice, if intelligently used in sufficient strength, at the time the stables and sheds are cleaned and disinfected. The treatment of animals is repeated one or more times at about ten-day intervals.