



Homemaking on the Prairies

Diversified farming is the only permanent method whereby happy, prosperous farm homes can be made

By W. J. Rutherford, Dean of Agriculture, University of Saskatchewan

A few years ago while I was still in the East I met a wheat grower from the West, and I, like all Easterners, challenged his methods. He knew his business much better than I did. "Why," he said, "we went out there to grow wheat. We have learned the business. Why shouldn't we grow it?"

"But," I said, "isn't your land becoming less fertile every year? I understand that you simply grow wheat, ship it away to distant markets and burn your straw, stubble and manure."

He explained to me the system and told me the approved methods of summerfallowing and recited all the arguments in favor of the plan he was following. I said, "Wouldn't cattle help you in your farming operations?"

"No," said he, "we have no markets for them or their products and besides we do not wish to be bothered with them. We want to take a trip east, south or west in the winter and if we have cattle we cannot do it." I said I understood that like other purely grain growing countries the Canadian West was being quickly overrun with weeds.

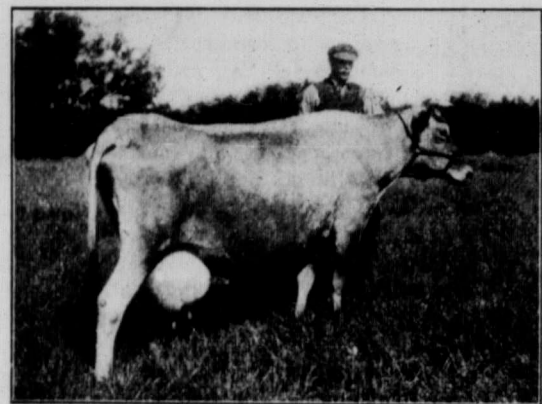
"Yes, but there are still great areas of fertile soil; we will move on and let someone else clean up the weeds."

"But with your continual summerfallowing and wind I understand your soil blows from one farm to another.

By the time you get thru with it, what with wild oats, stinkweed, mustard, perennial sow thistle, Canadian thistle, couch grass and lambsquarters, together with the blowing, your farm will be hard for anyone to handle."

His last rejoinder was, "Well, if you were there you would do the same as I am doing."

This conversation took place fifteen years ago. I met the man last summer at Brandon Fair. He was looking for a pure bred Holstein bull and a Yorkshire boar. He now has a fine herd of Holstein cattle and is making dairying a business in a much more substantial way than he did wheat growing. He returns the manure to the land, raises corn with ears on it and is talking of a silo. Part of his land is in grass.



THE FOUNDATION OF MANY FARM FORTUNES

He has no weed problem now, no loss of grade and dockage. He talks about conserving fertility, high milk and butterfat production, advanced registry, balanced rations, economic results of livestock farming. He is an inspiration.

This is exactly what is going on in all parts of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. The wheat farmer's problems—weeds, soil drifting, depleted fertility, low grades, congested markets, labor troubles, transportation difficulties, hail and crop failures—cannot be solved without the aid of livestock of one kind or another. No rational system where grain growing is included can be established without horses, cattle, sheep or hogs. The farmers of the great cotton belt in the south tried it and failed. Now they are establishing rotations in which livestock, pasture and feeding operations are included and there is rapidly arising a New South. The great wheat belt of the northwestern states tried it and failed. Now they are establishing similar rotations and we are gradually coming to see that our agriculture cannot be permanent unless we engage in a rational system.

Quite a large number of our early settlers started right. They brought a few head of stock with them and have gradually accumulated extensive herds and flocks. These farmers now have holdings much more valuable than when they entered upon them. They usually have good houses and barns, shelter belts, water supply and fences. Their savings at first were invested in these requisites of a good farm home



CATTLE MAKE THE FARM ATTRACTIVE AS WELL AS PROFITABLE

where the whole family are partners in the undertaking of farming. Now the local banks carry the savings of these people and loan them at good rates of interest to those whose capital has not been invested so as to create wealth. In one of these neighborhoods a little while ago the local bank carried about ninety-five thousand dollars of their savings.

The Danger of Plunging

We are moving fast towards diversified farming. Sometimes individuals move too fast. They think if a few hogs are good several hundred would be better, and then the trouble begins. A man hears that sheep will help him keep down weeds and will return him double profits during the year. He immediately sets about to procure a flock of sheep. Now, unless he has proper fences in which to enclose them, his sheep will become the greatest nuisance and the man who induced him to buy will be considered similarly. But most men coming here to this new country have had to start at the bottom and work up. It is easy at first to grow wheat. The equipment on a small farm is inexpensive, but it must not be looked upon as a permanent system unless accompanied by stock raising. The family demands milk, cream and butter and so one of the first investments is in a good cow. This cow and her progeny in the course of ten years will have grown into a herd. A brood sow will constitute a valuable investment. She and her litter will utilize what would otherwise be wasted. She can live about a straw stack during the winter. A box stall can be fixed up for her and her litter until they are



MAKING A RIGHT START

old enough to run outside. The proceeds from this source will in a short time fence the farm or a part of it with woven wire hog, sheep and coyote proof fence. Part of the farm will by this time be laid down to grass.

A light sowing of rape or oats on the summerfallow in July will, with the volunteer wheat, afford fine pasture for cattle and sheep. They utilize this green feed to make good growth and at the same time pack the fallow for the seed-bed next spring. The man who invested his first savings in a cow or two, a pair of brood mares, a good brood sow, or a small flock of sheep, has gradually worked up to a well balanced herd and flock with good farm buildings, fences, pasture, shade and water. What a contrast this with a worn out, weedy, dilapidated wheat

ranch, with nothing about it to attract young or old to stay there and call it home.

500 PER CENT. PROFIT

If a railroad company were to pay 500 per cent. dividends it would not be long before everyone would complain of the exorbitant profits made by the company. The selection of seed grain on the farm offers an opportunity for a small investment on each farm, and for a very large investment on all of the farms of the prairie provinces, which will be easily capable of returning 500 per cent. profit.

There is no doubt in the mind of anyone who is familiar with the relative merits of good and poor seed, that if only the best grain produced is saved for seed the increased yield per acre would be worth at least one dollar per acre over the yield now secured from ordinary seed or from seed sown without careful cleaning and grading.

Most farmers in selling hogs in the fall save a number of the best in the herd for breeding purposes. It is just as logical and there is just as much room for improvement to select the best individuals in grain as to select the best individuals in animals. Selling or feeding 900 bushels of grain out of the 1000 bushels raised, and leaving the 100 bushels in the bin for seed, is no more logical than for the farmer who raises 100 hogs and wishes to keep 10 for breeding purposes to make his selection of breeding stock by opening the gate and allowing 90 hogs to run out and keeping the 10 that remain.



Livestock assisted very materially in making this prosperous home possible.