

A Reply to Alfalfa Critics

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WE cannot grow alfalfa, so what's the use in preaching it. Farm and Dairy has lost a nice bunch of money for me of mankind. I don't. My alfalfa crop has never amounted to anything. It takes a long time to grow a profitable investment in alfalfa seed, cost of seedling, and the loss of the small farm to grow it. I don't. My alfalfa crop has never amounted to anything. It takes a long time to grow a profitable investment in alfalfa seed, cost of seedling, and the loss of the small farm to grow it.

Unite*

There is a lot of talk like this going around in this section where Farm and Dairy is pretty generally read and where Farm and Dairy articles have induced a lot of people to give alfalfa a trial. Of course a lot of these experimenters have gone after the crop and have lost money. The farmers with more enthusiasm have joined. The result has been many failures. If there are as many kicks on their feet as your alfalfa policy elsewhere as there are in this immediate neighborhood, I fear there is much trouble in store for Farm and Dairy. I would like to have a little heart to heart talk with some of your critics.

In our own neighborhood, on farms side by side, with soil conditions practically the same, I can find two farmers, one of whom has taken Farm and Dairy's advice to try alfalfa, and is extra well pleased with the crop. His first seedling made three years ago has done well. True, there was considerable winter killed one year, but then his clover winter killed equally as bad. His neighbor across the line fence also tried alfalfa and is ready to declare that the crop is "no good." Does this look sensible? If one man can grow alfalfa on his farm, is there any reason why the other cannot? The only reason that I can think of is lack of knowledge of the crop.

GOOD SEED THE STARTER

I believe that seed of the wrong variety is responsible for much of the trouble with alfalfa. In spite of the fact that hardy varieties, such as Canadian Variegated and Grimm alfalfa, are the only ones advocated for use in Canada, I believe that the larger proportion of the seed used in our section has been of the Peruvian and similar tender varieties. I myself purchase seed directly from South-western Ontario, getting the Canadian Variegated variety, and have had no trouble with getting a good stand and keeping it. I have been told that there is very little good alfalfa seed for sale this year, the most of that offering being imported. If there are many failures with alfalfa this year we will be safe in nine cases out of 10 in attributing them to bad seed. Hence my first reply to alfalfa critics is: Do not go to the grocery store and buy the first seed that is offered you, then call down the crop because you get poor results.

Two conditions of soil that I have found to be detrimental to alfalfa are wetness and sourness. Alfalfa will not grow where it has wet feet. I have seen splendid crops growing on the heaviest clay, and in what appeared to be

almost pure gravel, but I never yet saw a good crop growing on land that was either wet or sour. Good drainage is one of the first essentials to alfalfa success. Where the soil has a tendency to be sour an application of lime may make the difference between alfalfa success and failure.

INOCULATION IS WORTH WHILE
Inoculation is another point on which I lay considerable stress. Several experiments have



Getting Ahead of the Meat Trust in the Good, Old Fashioned Way

The time was when the spring and fall butchering were common on every farm in the country. Today there are thousands of farmers who do not know how to kill and dress a hog. They are shipped alive to the meat store. Mr. E. A. Macdonald, of Lambton Co., Ont., still holds to the old custom, as this illustration abundantly testifies. In most cases, however, the new plan of shipping alive is the better one.

been conducted in this neighborhood in which alfalfa has been seeded in two plots, one inoculated and the other not. Occasionally where

the soil was very rich it was hard to detect any difference in the growth of the two crops, but as a general rule the inoculated plot was much the healthier. It only costs 25 cts. to get alfalfa inoculated from the Bacteriological Department at Guelph, where I secured mine, and it is a precaution well worth while. Some of my neighbors simply haul soil from an old alfalfa field and spread it in the new one. This practice is O. K., but is more laborious and expensive than the use of the laboratory preparation.

If there are any alfalfa critics who have followed all the foregoing practices to the word,

then I have only one further suggestion to make. I noticed that up to last year Farm and Dairy, in common with other agricultural magazines, advocated seeding with a nurse crop of three pecks of barley to the acre. Last year the more general advice was to cultivate thoroughly up to the first of July and then seed without a nurse crop.

This I believe to be the preferable plan, particularly where the soil is weedy. Thorough cultivation during the early part of the season to a certain extent cleans the soil of weeds. Its chief value, however, is that the soil is put in first-class mechanical condition and that the store of moisture for the use of the plants is much larger. If you have failed with alfalfa heretofore give this nurse-crop proposition a chance. Above all, do not condemn one of our great forage crops until you have tried it time and time again. Scores of us here in Ontario county are growing the crop to splendid advantage.

The Advantage of Small Fields

WE all know that large fields are the most economical of labor. Few of us are so seized of the importance of large fields that we are willing to spend good time and money in clearing away superfluous fences. Recently when delving through a neglected pigeon-hole in his desk an editor of Farm and Dairy came across an extract from an address delivered by Mr. J. H. Grisdale at Campbellford a couple of years ago that sums up the large versus small fields so nicely that we were immediately tempted to publish it, old as it is. Here is Mr. Grisdale's view of the situation:

"If a man has decided upon the crops to grow and the rotation to follow the next thing is how to do the work. If he follows a short rotation he will in a short time become impressed with the importance of having his farm either divided into large fields or grouped with all the fields that are in one group in one part of his farm and the fields in another group in another part of the farm."

"I notice that your farms here (Campbellford and vicinity) are rather badly cut up by dale, hill, waterways, and roadways, and I was sorry

to note that there were very few square fields between here and Peterboro. In many cases I saw fields evidently belonging to the same farmer that were two, three, five or six acres, and some of these fields divided lengthwise by a huge ditch on each side of which were weeds or grass. There is no necessity for these ditches. If you have to have an open ditch let me give you a pointer on how to get rid of the ditch and have it at the same time.

"For 10 years I wrestled with that question on a certain field we had. I closed up the ditch and opened it and closed it up again, and tried under-draining; but I found we had to have a ditch to take the surface water away because it would lie there so long in the spring after a rain. This is what I did. That ditch was in a field of 40 acres; and it is not convenient to jump a three-foot ditch with the seeder. We dug that ditch to the depth necessary and then we started and each year for three or four years when the crops were suitable we hollowed away the ditch so that starting at the ditch we crowded it back about 50 feet till it made no appreciable difference.

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