

# FARMER'S ADVOCATE

AND HOME MAGAZINE

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## Another Exceptional Season.

Following a cold, steady winter, which was protracted well towards the end of March, it was confidently predicted by those whose long residence entitled them to make forecasts on the weather, that we should have an unusually favorable seed time. The writer has resided in this country since 1879, and instead of being able to prophesy on the weather, is only able to record that during that time there have been nineteen seasons in which the weather has each spring been exceptional, with that of 1899 perhaps the most exceptional. But in spite of the excessive moisture and delay in seeding operations, there is still good reason for hope that 1899 will be a year of exceptional prosperity.

In some sections, owing to the wet, backward weather last fall, little plowing was done, and consequently it will be impossible to get as much land in wheat as was intended, necessitating a larger area of coarse grains or of summer-fallow. The excessive moisture both last fall and this spring has soaked the soil as it has not been soaked for many years. The soaking has firmed the soil so that there is little need of soil packers, and there should be no trouble with manured land lying too open, or with manure not incorporating with the soil. Where stubble-burning and seeding without plowing is practiced, as in parts of Assiniboia, there has been great trouble getting rid of the stubble, which in those districts was long and heavy last year.

With warm, moist weather for the next month or so, growth will be marvellously rapid, and even late sown crops will likely come to maturity in good time; but should the weather become dry there will be work to do to prevent, if possible, the surface becoming crusted (and baked in heavy soils), to the serious injury of growing crops. In heavy soils worked when a little wet the tendency to bake is of course much greater. Soil water either drains away through the soil or evaporates from the surface; in the latter case the moisture from below comes to the surface and passes off into the air by capillary attraction (as oil passes up the wick of a lamp as it is being consumed by the flame). After heavy rainfall or continued evaporation the surface of the soil becomes crusted, and then if it is desired to get rid of more moisture, it may be accomplished by using a disk harrow, set at a small angle so as to slice the soil and add to its evaporating surface; whereas, if it is desired to retain the moisture in the soil, a harrow or other implement should be used that will thoroughly stir the whole surface, not merely scratching it, but completely loosening it up. The newly introduced weeders should do this work to perfection, and they have the advantage over the harrow in that they can be used several times, and even after the grain is six or eight inches high without injury to the young plants.

## The Douglas Grain Bill.

The Winnipeg Board of Trade at a recent meeting passed a resolution condemning the bill introduced by Dr. Douglas, M. P., into the House, at Ottawa, re-regulating of the grain trade in Manitoba and the Territories. In the Board of Trade resolution there is nothing new—it simply seeks to protect the present elevator system, which is all right enough as far as it goes. In the Douglas bill there is much that appears superfluous—that to the ordinary lay mind only tends to confuse and mix up things. All that the producer wants is liberty to ship his grain through an elevator, flat warehouse, or from his wagon, as may seem best, and not to be forced to put his grain through an elevator belonging to parties with whom he does not wish to do business. And, again, in the matter of supplying cars, it is the duty of the railroads as common carriers to supply sufficient cars to handle the trade, and not to discriminate against any one, be he farmer or dealer.

## Seeding Down.

There will, doubtless owing to the lateness of seeding, be a greatly increased area devoted to grass this season. The benefits of seeding down old land from which the humus has all been worked are well known, but many seem to feel that they can't spare the land from grain crops for seeding down, especially when native hay and pasture is fairly plentiful. But it will pay to seed down for the benefit of the land, if for no other reason. While timothy does well in some sections, native rye grass and Bromus inermis do well almost anywhere, and provided clean, pure seed can be had, it can be sown with every assurance of a good catch and satisfactory results. Home-grown seed gives best results, and where possible should be procured. There are several parties who have advertised in our columns home-grown seed of above grasses guaranteed free from noxious weeds.

## Horse Breeding.

To the Editor FARMER'S ADVOCATE:

I have read with interest the letter of Mr. A. Innes on "The Condition and Needs of the Horse Trade" in your issue of April 5th, and quite agree with all he has to say of the kinds of horses which it is desirable to raise. But for how many years have we heard all this, and to what purpose? It is surely not a new thing to hear that good heavy drafts, saddlers, carriage horses and hunters will always command good prices in the foreign markets. Our foremost breeders have from time immemorial insisted on the necessity of breeding for some definite purpose, and what is there to show (in this country, at least) for their labors in the direction of improvement? We have had in this country, in the last fourteen years, imported stallions, of almost every breed, good enough to take prizes, and which have taken prizes, in Old Country and Eastern showings. How have these stallions been patronized? Our Industrial Exhibition is a great educator for those capable of being educated, but what about the others, who apparently form the great majority? Here stands one at the side of the showing with critical eye, explaining the weak points (and over-feeding, which annoys him greatly) of the prizewinners. Should you visit his farm you will probably find that, despairing of finding a perfect stallion, he has selected the one that was cheapest in his own district, and, not content with spoiling the produce of one mare by this line of breeding, has bred all his mares, big and little, to the same stallion, thereby getting his services cheaper. After a few years he will probably tell you that horse-breeding is a lottery, but if he is an honest man he must admit that the comparison is very unfair to the lottery, there being nothing but blanks in his.

There is another kind of lottery which, however, has some prizes, and this is the breeding of a mare of unknown blood to a stallion which seems to suit her in class, and good of his kind. He must, of course, be sound and pedigreed, and the longer the pedigree the better. The number of prizes in this lottery will depend on the skill of the individual breeder in the selection of the sire and in the general management of his stock.

Lastly comes the breeding of horses "in line." Some of the fillies in the preceding example have shown a distinct advance in the direction desired, and by patiently building on these and culling out the others we advance steadily to a point at which our mares are pedigreed, for all practical purposes of the breeder. I do not wish to be understood as advising the breeder to use or keep entire his colts but he has at his command all the information that a pedigree can supply; and the only practical value of a pedigree lies in its record of so many generations of line breeding.

Unfortunately, too many breeders are impatient of results. They will admit that it took them years to evolve from their native cattle the fine herd that they now own, and that it was only accomplished by cross after cross of pure-bred bulls. But when they breed an under-bred mare to a pedigreed stallion they expect in the first generation a valuable, high-class colt. They are prone to forget that a filly which only shows a slight improvement over her dam may turn out to be a valuable brood mare when mated with a stallion of the same breed.

The chief difficulty in line breeding lies in the uncertainty as to what stallion may be in the district in any year. I think a small combination of

breeders in any district would be sufficient to attract or retain a satisfactory stallion, but if this is impossible it remains to send the mare to the stallion to be bred or to leave her barren for the year. To breed her to a stallion which the owner of the mare believes to be unsuited to her is only to throw away service fee and feed, for although the prices obtainable for good horses are on the rise, the poor ones are still almost unsalable.

I would like to suggest that it would be a good thing to have payments for insured mares fall due soon after harvest. This would be, I think, a satisfactory time for farmers to make these payments, and would cause less grumbling than in February or March. It would also relieve the stallion-owner of the risks of the overloading of insured mares, and of plunging them through deep snow; and, while making the breeder more careful, would enable the owner of the stallion to give a lower insurance rate. At present the careful farmer pays for the careless one.

For the last few years the market for light delivery horses has been glutted with ranch-bred horses, and some few of these are used as saddle horses by those who are not very particular as to their mount. They range in price from \$18 to \$30, an occasional one going a little higher, while a good-sized farm-bred saddler would in any of these years bring \$125 and over; but as farmers will not raise these, a purchaser who wants anything better than a broncho has to get it from Ontario. These horses can only be bred from a Thoroughbred stallion, for although pulling the mane and cutting the tail of a trotting horse may accentuate the size of his head and the crookedness of his hind legs, it cannot diminish the roughness of his paces.

Why is it that Ontario supplies practically the whole of our demand for work horses? We should have an advantage of about \$50 over the Ontario breeder in our own market, when freight and profit are taken into consideration. Why do not farmers at any rate supply themselves from the surplus of their neighbors? This is, I think, partly because a farmer does not care to be indebted to a brother farmer in the absence of ready money, whereas he willingly gives a note to a dealer. Surely the advantage is mutual, and each party gains by this deal! It is also, I think, partly due to farmers raising very few really heavy horses, and also because the average farmer very seldom has his colts really fit to sell till fall, when the demand has ceased.

As I am afraid that I am trespassing on your valuable space, I will venture a few suggestions in conclusion. We may expect to find a market for our colts if we breed the heaviest of our heavy mares to good heavy pedigreed stallions. Your district will be favored indeed when it becomes necessary for you to decide between the rival merits of the Clyde and Shire. Middle-weight mares, if of good quality (a very large "if") may be bred with advantage to a good Hackney, or if they are lacking in quality they will be better bred to a Thoroughbred. The small mares I should be inclined to leave alone. It is unnecessary, I should think, to insist once more on soundness in both sire and dam, but we must not forget that size, substance and action are worth dollars in every line. As the time for selling approaches, put your colts in a condition fit for sale, and if you get a fair offer at home let the foreign markets look out for themselves. It should be quite possible to induce the secretary of one's district agricultural society, for a slight consideration, to keep a list of the colts that are for sale in the district. The breeder could supply the details showing whether his colts were heavy or light, and from this a dealer could find out where he could get a carload without traveling thirty or forty miles between each purchase. You cannot expect the dealer to come before the colts are there. Try to combine with your neighbors to guarantee, say, twenty mares to a suitable stallion, and a small advertisement will, I think, bring many satisfactory replies.

Lastly, remember that the Horse Breeders' Association was formed to further the interests of breeders, and that any suggestions along the line of improvement in breeding or selling facilities will be welcomed by the Association, and all assistance in their power given. We must not forget, however, that an association supported as it is without Government grant and without salaried officers is apt to lose enthusiasm in the face of half-hearted support of those for whom it works. Are you a member, or are you confiding your interests to the care of everybody else?

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Winnipeg.