

The Rape Field Again--Questions for Mr. Gibson.

To the Editor FARMER'S ADVOCATE:

SIR,—In your issue of Nov. 2nd, Mr. R. Gibson, in writing on sheep, mentioned cabbage as being better than rape for feed. Does he pasture the cabbage or is he speaking of winter feed? I would not think of rape as of any service for winter feeding. Would Mr. Gibson explain how he cultivates cabbage in all its stages of growth and how he feeds them in winter time.

I will give your readers my experience with rape. Three years ago we "ganged" four acres of fall wheat stubble and sowed three pounds of rape seed per acre the first week of August, but we had no rain for six weeks and it came too late to amount to anything. Next year I sowed rape on a field of oats. The season being very dry, it did not do much on the high part of the field, and in the lower portions it grew almost too well, for at harvest a good deal of it was cut with the binder. We had no trouble in curing the oats, owing to good dry weather, but had it turned out a wet season it would have been almost impossible to have got them dry. This season (1896) I sowed 48 pounds on a twelve-acre field of fall wheat just after we had done with the spring seeding. We gave it one run of the harrow. It did splendidly. We always cut fall wheat higher than oats; very little of it reached the knife. In the course of a week or ten days we had the field cleared and I turned on the milk cows. There was a good bite and the milk came freely, but the taste of rape came too; so I put the cows in just after milking in the evening and let them remain on the rape all night. We milked early in the morning, then let them run on the pasture all day. That seemed to work all right; only the faintest taste could be noticed. We had some steers, two and three years old, and put them in along with the cows and they did well. We never had such fall feed. So much for profit. But now comes the loss. One night there was just a faint touch of frost, and one of the three-year-olds turned up his heels. I could hardly believe that it was the rape. Afterwards came a very heavy frost, but cows and steers were all right. The next night just a light rind of frost and my best three-year-old was gone too. That made me look blue, for it took the profit out of the rape pretty well. I then turned all of our cattle on in the morning, let them remain until they were well filled, then turned them off until next morning. I have had them on when the plants were nearly covered with snow, and in rain, too. I put them on without any injurious results. I kept the calves and lambs on all the time, but they had the run of a grass field at will and have done splendidly. I intend to see if it will stand the winter and try it next summer for pasture. How would a crop of rape do to plow in on clay land? Bruce Co., Ont.

"ANTRIM FARM."

Silo Covering at the O. A. C.

A great variety of plans have been tried for preserving the top ensilage in the silo, such as swamp grass, cut hay, chaff wetted, boards (weighted); others simply tramping down level and leaving without anything additional. John Gould's latest plan was to tramp level, sprinkle with water and then sow heavily with oats. In a short time the oats sprout and a dense mat of vegetation grows over the ensilage so that only about an inch or so of the corn will be spoiled. If any of our readers have a better plan than any of the above or this following, we would like to hear from them:—

To the Editor FARMER'S ADVOCATE:

SIR,—We have been experimenting at the O. A. C. for some time to find an effectual and cheap covering for the silo to prevent the ensilage from molding on top before it is cured, which takes about a month in the silo. The only successful covering we have yet discovered is factory cotton sewed together, making a sheet the size of silo. Before it is required for use spread on barn floor and give two coats of crude petroleum with a paint brush. As soon as the silo is filled and tramped, cover over the top with the prepared sheet. Then lay 2-inch planks, 10 or 12 inches wide, around the sides, fitted neatly at the corners for a square silo; and for a round silo, segments will require to be made to fit neatly around the side of silo. The only ensilage we had spoiled was between the planks and sides of silo, which can be prevented by filling the space between planks and sides of silo with salt.

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Attend to the Foal's Feet.

A point in the care of colts during their first winter is that of keeping the feet trimmed in proper shape. This requires especial attention when they are running in a box stall on deep manure. The feet should receive attention soon after they are housed, and afterwards as often as is necessary. Many colts are ruined for life by allowing their toes to grow too long, thus throwing too much strain upon certain ligaments and in this way weakening and injuring the pastern joints. Many crooked ankles that now exist might have been avoided if a little attention had been given at the proper time.

The success of the FARMER'S ADVOCATE has been in large measure due to the friendly co-operation of our readers in all parts of Canada and other countries. We bespeak a continuance of their support.

Inflammation from Eating Frozen and Wet Rape.

J. E., Grey Co., Ont.:—"I sowed a field with rape last spring among my oats. After harvesting the oats the rape did remarkably well. About Sept. 20th I turned my sheep on it; they also had a clover field that they could run in at their liberty. After they had been on about three weeks I found a fine ewe dead in the field; she was bloated very much and appeared to have been purged very badly. I then turned the sheep off the rape, as I thought that perhaps she had eaten too much in the mornings when wet and frozen. I left them off for over a week and there was beautiful weather, so I let them on again. They had only been on a few days when I noticed another ewe sick. I at once drove her home and gave her a teaspoonful of spirits of turpentine, but she was dead in half an hour, and seemed in great agony, and, like the first, had purged badly. I then turned them off the rape for good; but when away from home, they broke into the field again and were on for two days. After dinner the third day they were turned off, apparently all right, but about eight o'clock my pure-bred ram was sick, and was dead in an hour after we first noticed him, and he acted the same as the other. My cattle have been on the field during that time and doing well. What has been the cause? I am led to think they have been poisoned by some weed. Would they eat poisonous weeds? Would it be possible to get bad seed in the rape? The seedsman that I bought it from said it was imported from England. Kindly give me what information you can on this subject, and oblige an old subscriber."

[NOTE.—The ADVOCATE has seldom recommended the feeding of rape without attaching a number of necessary cautions which must be observed to avoid loss. The writer may say that because of losses of pure-bred sheep the growing of rape for a number of years was abandoned, and was not resumed again until we saw our way clear to exercise great care and watchfulness over the flock during the rape pasturing season. Sheep must not have frozen rape, and wet rape is not good for them. The treatment given the flock by "J. E." was perhaps about the most dangerous possible, as each time they were allowed in the field they were doubtless hungry, and not having become accustomed to so succulent a food, an extreme bowel disturbance was set up; hence the purging referred to, and finally the inflammation of the bowels or stomach which no doubt terminated the lives of the sheep in question.]

The following is the course we have found essential to the welfare of the flock: When first the flock was turned onto the rape the sheep were not hungry and the rape leaves were free from external moisture. They were turned out of the rape each evening for at least a week, and not admitted again in the morning until the dew was mostly gone. After that time, if there was no evidence of frost or rain, we considered them safe to have access to the rape field continually, provided they had a grass field to run in as well. If for any reason the sheep had to be kept out of the rape for two or three days, extra care in readmitting them was always exercised. We always considered white frost more dangerous than hard frost when the leaves were frozen, because they would eat the former more readily. In another article in this issue, upon rape feeding, reference is made to the loss of several steers. We have no hesitation in saying that the losses were due to the same as those already mentioned as killing the sheep. It is seldom, however, that cattle die from such a cause. With regard to the poisoning referred to, it is generally agreed among old shepherds that sheep, above all other animals, will not touch plants of a poisonous nature. In this case poisoning is entirely improbable, as the conditions under which the rape was eaten were conducive to the losses sustained.—EDITOR.]

Feed Well-Bred Hogs.

It is a question in the minds of a good many whether pedigree or individual merit should be first considered in raising pigs for the market. We would venture to say that the first named should receive the greatest attention, for the reason that it is pedigree which gives prepotency to the type, and consequently a breed that can be relied upon to produce certain results under similar conditions. It is when the feeding and final fattening for market comes on that the value of pedigree shows up. Nondescript animals will consume a great deal more food, and in every respect prove unsatisfactory. For economy in producing pork there is nothing that tells like established pedigree. But while recognizing the great importance of pedigree, the merits of individual animals must not be overlooked. Amongst all pedigree stock there are weeds which must be eliminated, and a strange fact is that the most showy animals do not always produce the best stock of their kind. Therefore, when once a boar is known to produce entirely satisfactory progeny, that animal should be kept as long as possible for breeding purposes; and not less important than the boar is the brood sow, which should also be a carefully selected animal.

One of the main secrets of keeping apples is an even temperature, as near the freezing point as possible, not below it; keep them dry and do not permit any circulation of air.

Preparing and Feeding Fodder.

Winter feeding has well begun and farmers know just about what amount of food they have on hand with which to carry their stock until nature smiles upon the meadows, bringing forth the verdure of 1897. The experience of years has taught that economy must be exercised in order to meet the requirements of a possible late spring, but too seldom do we study the question of compounding and preparing the food we have with a view to making the most of it. To those who have neglected this part of the question we will refer to a series of experiments conducted by H. J. Patterson, B. S., of the Maryland Experiment Station, in order to ascertain the best methods of preparing and feeding cured corn fodder. The comparison made was between cut fodder fed dry and alone, as hay is fed, and cut fodder wetted and thoroughly mixed with the grain ration. The fodder used differed from that found on most Canadian farms by reason of being deprived of its cobs. It was prepared for feeding by being cut with a machine that split the stocks and shredded the leaves. Nine cows were used for the test, divided into two groups of four and five. It was aimed to give each animal all she would eat, along with ten pounds of a grain ration made up of equal parts, by weight, of corn and cob meal, wheat bran, and gluten meal. In mixing the feed the grain and fodder were thoroughly mixed and wet with water. In cold weather the feed was generally mixed twelve hours ahead. With regard to the food wasted or refused to be eaten, it was estimated that of the fodder fed dry and separate 13 per cent. was left, while with the moistened and mixed ration only 7.3 per cent. was left unconsumed—approximately about one half.

The result based on the yield of milk from the different preparation of rations showed a small total gain in favor of the mixed ration. The condition of the cows as to flesh production from the different foods shows a great advantage in using the mixed moist ration. This portion of the work consists simply of a record of the weights of the animals at the beginning and end of the experiments. The animals were weighed in as nearly the same condition as to the time of feeding, watering, etc., at the different times as possible. In every case there was a gain in favor of the mixed ration, the least being 9 pounds and the most 85 pounds, with an average of 48 pounds for the 9 cows in the periods of 32 days for the dry-fed lot and 25 days for the mixed fodder fed lot. Digestion experiments were also conducted with the same two preparations of fodder with steers, which showed an advantage in mixing and moistening the fodder.

Conclusion.—The results obtained show that by wetting and mixing the shredded corn fodder with the grain ration there is more complete consumption of the fodder (there being but half as much waste matter) than when the fodder and grain are fed dry and separate. The method of mixing produced more milk and kept the animals in better flesh, which is a very important factor in successful dairying.

The wetting of the fodder when fed alone, and also when fed with grain, made it more digestible. The method of feeding the ration as a "mixed feed" gave a larger percentage of digestible matter than any of the methods tested. From these facts it is safe to say that the method of making a mixed feed of a ration is the best method to adopt in order to have the most complete consumption and the best returns for the food consumed.

From the above conclusion it would seem as though the improved palatability and succulence had something to do with the favorable results, and no doubt that explains the preference many feeders have for pulping their roots and cutting their straw and feeding them mixed over feeding them separately. We would do well to remember that the natural and most satisfactory all-round food for our stock is succulent, nutritious grass, which the more closely we imitate the more nearly will the results attained be to those acquired from June pasture.

Possibilities With Old Fences.

There are many farms bearing old rail fences that their owners have felt for years would be better torn down and rebuilt upon the same or other location. They have been built upon and added to until they contain at least enough good rails to construct a good straight fence. The undertaking is not a big one, and when it is finished the satisfaction of seeing the neat, newly constructed fence, in addition to all the firewood for next summer, will more than repay the farmer for his time and new wire. There is no more favorable time for the moving of rails than just after the ground has frozen and before snow comes. A pair of bobsleighs can be used, even if there is no snow, when the site of the new fence is to be somewhere else than that of the present one. If the ground should be too much frozen to break the crust to set the stakes or posts, everything can be got in readiness to rebuild in the spring, and that will be found a great advantage when the building time does come. The sorting of the rails, cutting and sharpening stakes or preparing posts and sawing up the "done" fence timber into firewood can all be finished in the slack season, and the putting up of the fence will be as nothing in the spring before seeding operations commence, when the ground will be so soft that the stakes can all be driven with a sledge hammer. If possible do not put this work off