FARM AND DAIRY
& RURAL HOME

We Welcome Practical Progressive Ideas

The Recognized Exponent of Dairying in Canada

Trade increases the wealth and glory of a country; but its real strength and stamina are to be looked for among the cultivators of the land.—*Lord Chatham*

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Soiling Crops for Maximum Summer Milk Yields

F. E. ELLIS, B. S. A.

I CAN well remember when short pastures and shorter milk cheques were taken for granted during the hot summer months. It seemed as natural for a cow to shrink in her milk yield during July and August as for her to dry up four or five months previous to calving. Both were necessary evils.

Now we see the situation from a different angle. The cows of a good dairy farmer do not shorten up in their milk yield in midsummer because of lack of fed, nor do they board in the stable unprofitably for four or five months. A good dairy cow is worked to her capacity for 10 months of the year. We have come to see that once a cow is allowed to drop away in her milk flow she can never be got back satisfactorily. Consequently those whose herds make the best showing exercise "foresight" rather than "hindsight," and are preparing now for summer feeding.

PLANT SOILING CROPS

Most of us can see the wisdom of planting soiling crops when the milk flow begins to diminish. Now, however, that spring planting is at hand, is the time to prepare for short pastures. When planning our crops for an abundance of feed next winter we might well devote some of our time and some of our land to soiling crops to meet the needs of the coming summer. Prof. Henry of Wisconsin was not far wrong when he said that while American farmers were toiling to fill their barns with winter provender for their cows, those same cows were often starving on the other side of the fence from the growing crops.

The first point in summer feeding that should be attended to is the proper preservation of the pasture during the spring and early summer. Most of us, when feed is short, get the cows on to the pasture at the earliest opportunity before the grass has attained any growing strength. The pasture is kept closely cropped and is useless fully a month sooner than it would be were the grass given an opportunity to make a strong start. The twenty-fourth of May is early enough for turning the cows to pasture in most sections of Eastern Canada. I know that when food is scarce the temptation is strong. A rule adopted by many good men is this: If it is grain that is scarce, buy grain rather than turn the cattle to pasture. If it is roughage that is scarce, turn the cattle to pasture and make extra provision for soiling crops for use later on. I doubt if roughage can be bought profitably for even good dairy cows.

A GOOD SOILING CROP

A mixture of peas and oats is a standard soiling crop and a good one. My practice when milking 30 cows was to calculate on two acres of soiling crop per week for two months. Two acres of peas and oats will afford abundance of green feed for 30 cows when the pastures are almost absolutely dry. Our practice was to make four sowings, the first sowing first thing in the spring, the next two sowings at intervals of two weeks, and the fourth sowing at the end of another three weeks. One and one-half bushels of oats and an equal quantity of peas was our seeding on loamy soil. Occasionally a peck of vetches was added, which made the crop easier to handle and probably added somewhat to its feeding value.

Utility and Beauty Here Combine

This is Netherall Brownie 9th, at one time Ayrshire champion of the world. She proved her ability as a producer. And where would you find a more desirable show type? This combination of beauty and utility is the one for which all good breeders strive.

The selection of the field for the soiling crop is an important item in reducing labor. The field that is to be sowed to grain that is nearest to the buildings and the nearest side of the field is the best selection. The proportion that I have mentioned, two acres per week for 30 cows, will be too much if the season is at all good for pasture. With this crop, however, one cannot seed too much, as the peas and oats may be allowed to mature and be threshed for grain, or cut on the green side for hay. The grain mixture when ground is a rich chop, especially suitable for milk production. If cut for hay I prefer to start the mower early, as the straw is then much more palatable when chred.

DOES NOT INTERFERE WITH ROTATION

A still further advantage of the pea-oat mixture is that the growing of the soiling crop does not interfere with the regular rotation. In fact, the chances are better for getting a good catch of clover with the soiling crop than with the grain crop, as the soiling crop is cut earlier in the season and the clover stand given the monopoly of the soil moisture. Some of the best catches of clover I have ever seen have been from soiling crop seeding.

If one has succeeded in getting a field of alfalfa started the supplementing of dry pastures is in a fair way to solution. Where the alfalfa field is handled intelligently, it will yield green feed from early in the season almost until frost comes. When the alfalfa is fed very green, precautions must be taken to avoid bloat. Most alfalfa feeders prefer to cut a considerable quantity at a time, leave it in the windrow all day to wilt and then coil neatly. In a couple of days the coils are hauled in and one has a palatable supplementary feed in quantity enough to last for several days.

CORN FOR FALL FEEDING

A small field of corn near the buildings for fall feeding is a practice that has become common because of its merit. Did you ever notice, however, that quite frequently when the corn is first fed, the cows go back in their milk instead of responding under its influence? It is well to remember that green corn up to, and even after, the tasselling stage is mostly water, and although a cow's stomach capacity is great, she could not possibly consume enough of this green corn to meet her bodily requirements for nutriment. When the corn reaches the dough stage it makes good feeding, but before that, left-over silage is much to be preferred.

The best method of all for supplementing the pasture—by means of the summer silo—I have left to the last because of lack of personal experience with the method. Twin silos, however, are now becoming too common a sight to be commented on in most of the dairy districts, and the men who, by increasing their corn acreage and silo capacity, prepare a year in advance for short pastures tell me that there is no other way to compare with it. Corn is the most dependable of all crops. A review of crop situations in Canada for the past 10 years shows that corn has never been an absolute failure and that it has averaged better than any other single crop. It returns more food value per acre than does any other crop. An acre of good corn turned into silage will yield as much nutriment as three acres of good pasture.

All of these points in favor of the corn crop are also equally good arguments for the sum-