

What Does it Cost to Fill Your Silo?

Adequate Machinery and Cooperation in Work will Simplify the Operation.
'Some Filling Hints.'

HOW much does it cost to put ensilage in your silo? Three hundred Missouri farmers answered the question recently in the light of their own experience. The highest estimate was \$1.65 a ton; the lowest was 23½ cts. a ton; the average was about 60 cts. a ton. Estimates made by silo owners in various parts of Canada show an equal variation in cost, which on the average would be somewhere between 60 and 70 cents. Even the Experimental Stations vary widely, reporting all the way from 71 cts. to \$1.50 as the cost of putting corn in the silo. Why such wide variations?

There are few operations on the farm that call for better management, if costs are to be kept down to a minimum, than the filling of a silo. First in importance comes machinery of the right size, and the right kind. Then we must have just teams enough to keep the blower going at its maximum rate. If there are too few teams the men in the silo and the one feeding the blower are idle. If there are too many teams there must be a team standing idle the greater part of the time. We must calculate to have just enough extra men in the field to help load the corn on wagons, and always be busy. Every farmer must study this problem out for himself, taking into consideration the distance of the field from the barn, the size of loads generally hauled in his neighborhood, and all other factors that affect the amount of help required. The experience of one year should be made to assist in laying plans for the succeeding year.

COOPERATION IN FILLING.

The best system of silo filling is the cooperative one. Seven farmers with farms of average size and one or two silos to the farm, make a good combination for silo filling. Exchanging work may be no cheaper than hiring all the help necessary to fill your own silo, but in most localities these extra men cannot be had at any price. One such silo filling circle includes seven farmers owning 12 silos, ranging from 125 to 200 tons capacity. These men got together and bought a 17 inch corn cutter with 30 feet of blower and distribution pipe, and then they hired a traction engine from a threshing outfit to furnish the power. The engine cost from \$8 to \$10 a day. Each man furnished his own coal, and boarded the men and teams.

This circle showed their wisdom by making their first purchase a corn binder. It takes a lot of men to go into a field and cut enough corn to keep a silage cutter busy, and it was this item of expense that accounted largely for the top estimates of those 300 Missouri farmers. Usually it will not pay to use less than a 14-inch silage cutter and one with a 17 inch knife is better. Such a

cutter has a capacity of 10 to 15 tons an hour. A mistake frequently made where silage machinery is bought on the cooperative plan is to try to run the cutter with too small an engine. Nothing under ten horse power will give maximum speed to a medium sized blower.

WHERE TO PUT THE BEST MEN.

The packing of the ensilage inside the silo is a point of great importance, and the proprietor should either be in the silo himself or have his best and most reliable men there. The silage should be distributed evenly, keeping it somewhat higher in the centre and thoroughly tramping it down, particularly at the edges. Only in this way can the air be satisfactorily excluded, and the silage properly preserved. Two men can keep both hands and feet busy distributing the silage and tramping it down in a 12 foot silo.

An old illusion in regard to the silo is that green corn makes the best silage, and the corn binder is often started too early in the season. Green corn has a tendency to sour and silage made from it has no the feeding value of silage made from corn that has reached the glazing stage. A still older myth is that the ears do not add to the value of the silage, and that they may be pulled off for grain and only the stocks and leaves put into the silo. This mistake is more frequently made in the corn belt states than in Canada. Farm and Home tells of the experience of one dairyman, Mr. Matthew Michels, of Wisconsin, along this line. "He fed his cows up to mid-winter on silage made from whole corn, then changed to silage made from stalks and leaves only. The milk production dropped off heavily at once. To bring the herd back to its former standard and maintain it there, Mr. Michels had to feed not only all the corn he saved by taking off the ears but a lot of expensive mill feed besides." This hint may not be needed by most of Farm and Dairy readers, but we have heard of a few cases where the ears have been removed from silage corn.

SILAGE SHOULD BE MOIST.

The more moisture there is in silage the better it will set and the longer it will be properly preserved, provided the proper stage of ripeness has been reached. Where corn is ripe and hard it is advisable to add moisture. A 17 inch cutter running to full capacity would cut corn enough to require all of the water that could be run into the blower through ¾ inch hose attached to an elevated tank or barrel. There is very little danger of getting it too moist. Where corn has been frozen the addition of moisture is an absolute necessity if the ensilage is to be preserved.

When silos first came into use it was thought necessary to weigh them down after filling. One

progressive eastern dairyman has confessed that the first year he had a silo he had no less than one ton of stone on top of the planks that covered the ensilage. We now know that the weight of the ensilage itself is a much more effective means of compression than any weight that may be added. A few days after the first filling the silo will have settled several feet and if there is corn left the silo may be filled a second time. A better plan, however, is to erect boards of a height of eight to 10 feet around the silo, tie in with fence wire, and fill in to allow for settling. The operation may then be completed at one operation when the help is at hand.

For covering the top of the silo probably nothing is cheaper than corn with the ears removed. Some farmers prefer wet straw. No matter what is used for covering the silo the top should be thoroughly saturated with water, and this will reduce the rotting by a couple of inches. In any case there will be a few inches of decayed silage on top that will have to be removed when feeding commences.—F. E. E.

Increasing Grain Production

F. C. N., Commission of Conservation, Ottawa.

MANY farmers, when urged to try growing fall wheat, have excused themselves on the plea that it did not pay, but it is likely that for the next year or two, there will be ready sales at good prices for every bushel of wheat grown in Canada. Every farmer should endeavor to increase his production of grain next year by putting into use every acre capable of producing it. There are hundreds of acres in Central and Eastern Canada that would successfully grow fall wheat. By preparing the land immediately, a great number of farmers could sow at least a few acres each this fall. No risk is being taken in so doing, as the extra cultivation for the fall wheat would increase the yield of a spring wheat crop in the event of the wheat being winter-killed. The land would need only to be disked and cultivated to prepare it for spring grain.

The grain production can also be increased by plowing up the old unproductive meadows at once and sowing to grain in the spring. They should be plowed shallow now, and packed and disked and kept worked until autumn, when they should be thoroughly plowed again, ready to be worked early next spring. The importance of plowing the land for next spring's crop early this summer, and keeping it worked during the autumn cannot be too strongly emphasized. Those who are now practicing a systematic rotation might profitably increase the grain area next year, and to those who are following the old meadow plan of farming, a better opportunity was never offered to change to a systematic rotation by breaking up the old sod and putting in grain. It will pay to make use of every acre possible in producing grain, as it is sure to be needed.

The production of root seed on the farm is well worthy of consideration and trial. Especially is this true when we consider the poor germinating qualities and low vitality of some of the imported seed that has been distributed in late years.

Crop rotation is of utmost importance in dealing with weeds. Some sharp, short rotation of crops should be adopted which will allow of the frequent use of a smother crop or hoed crop.—Prof. J. E. Howitt, O.A.C., Guelph.

The gossip is a universal institution. It is either her business to make broken hearts, disrupted homes and trouble generally. Though civil law cannot punish the gossip, we have faith enough in eternal justice to believe that eventually the gossip will receive a just reward.

Plow D
R. C.

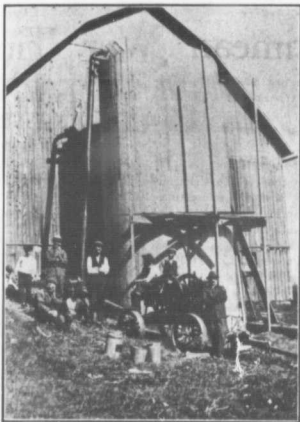
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A Wooden Silo Without Hoops

This unusual type of silo was constructed by F. J. Harvey, Stansted Co., Que. The feature that appeals most strongly to its owner is that there are no hoops to get loose. Will Mr. Harvey please send more details regarding the construction of this silo?