Preservative Treatment for Fence Posts

Soft Wood Properly Treated will Last Many Years

FENCE posts, which a few years ago every farmer cut in his own bush without ever a thought of cost, have now become so expensive in some localities that farmers are considering the advisability of growing their own fence posts. If this practice is widely followed, the trees grown for fence posts must necessarily be those that grow rapidly and have a soft wood. If put directly into the ground without previous treatment, such posts are highly unsatisfactory, their life not being half as long as the life of a good woven wire fence. In fact, it is foolish to put high-grade fencing on second-class posts. Hence the interest that is being taken in the preservative treatment of soft wood posts. At the price of a few cents per post, it is possible to take the cheapest wood and render it good for a quarter of a century of use.

Are There Any Silos of This Type in Canada?

If so, we have not heard of them. Pit silos, however, are quite common in Kansas, where this photo was taken. This particular silo is 32 feet under ground. Note the derrick for lifting out contents. As a general rule, pit silos are built in the side of a steep bank and are emptied very much as the ordinary above ground silo is emptied.—Photo courtesy Silver Mfg. Co.

The preservative treatment of fence posts is based on the fact that their decay is due to the action of fungus growths, which require a certain amount of air, moisture and food substance for their development. If we can rob these fungus growths of one of their three requirements to life, we will check the decay of the post and add to its life. The first point in treating a soft wood post is to have it properly seasoned. A seasoned post will absorb more preservative, and therefore last longer. Posts of sufficient size to split in two are to be preferred, as split posts do not crack badly. The preservative material usually recommended is creosote, which, if properly applied, will increase the life time of the post six to ten fold. In a recent issue of The Farmer, Ellis L. Kirkpatrick describes the treating process as follows:

The Process Described

"The simplest and most economical treatment is accomplished in a 24-gauge, galvanized steel tank, placed over a brick fire box. The fire box may be easily constructed of old bricks or stones. It should have several joints of old stove pipe connected with it at the back for a smokestack. A tank of the foregoing type, four feet deep and three feet in diameter, costing $6 to $12, will treat about twenty-five ordinary sized posts at once. Where only a few posts are to be treated, a steel gasoline barrel will answer the purpose of the tank.

"Another successful treating arrangement consists of two empty wooden kerosene barrels connected near the bottom by a three-inch flow (gas) pipe six or eight feet long. The fire is built under and around the pipe through which the heated liquid will flow to either barrel. This arrangement gives a little better control of the temperature of the liquid than the one previously mentioned.

Boiling in Creolin

"With either arrangement, enough creosote is put in the tank to fill it to within six or eight inches of the top, after the posts will have been added. Posts are placed in vertically, bottom end first. Since treatment is most needed near the ground mark, it is absorbed by the posts. Let the overseer be sure that the liquid stands as near the proper depth as possible. Thoroughness and carefulness count for a great deal in the operation.

"Time required for bottom treatment varies with the different kinds of woods, since some absorb the creosote much more readily than do others. The liquid should be heated to slightly above 212 degrees Fahrenheit (never above 250). Temperature may be controlled by removing and rebuilding the fire.

"Cold treatment" should follow the hot treatment in order that the post may absorb more of the preservative. It is given by allowing the posts to remain in the tank until the liquid cools or by removing them to a barrel of cold creosote where they may be left from six to twelve hours.

"Top treatment is needed to poison the food supply of fungi and to prevent the absorption of moisture by the post during wet weather, only. Therefore, it need not be as thorough as the former treatment, and is given by reversing the posts in the hot creosote and leaving them for fifteen minutes or by placing them in cold creosote and allowing them to remain until the temperature of the liquid reaches 212 degrees."

Details of the Process

The following table, prepared by G. B. MacDonald, Head Forester at Iowa State College, gives the time of bottom treatment, amount of material absorbed, and the cost per post of some of the more common soft woods.

Kind of wood	Time in hot creosote	Time in cold creosote	Pounds creosote absorbed	Cost per post
Cottonwood	4	10	5.2	.065
Boxelder	3	6	4.0	.08
Soft maple	3	6	4.0	.08
Willow	4	10	4.8	.095

Several Canadian farmers have applied creosote to fence posts, some with indifferent success because the application was indifferently done, and others with excellent results. One farmer, with whom we are acquainted, noticed that posts decay most rapidly just below the surface of the ground. Every post that went in on his farm received a coat of paint, extending in a belt around the post three inches above the ground and nine inches below. He started this practice over 30 years ago and can already talk of results, which have been highly satisfactory. In any region where fence posts can be profitably grown or where soft woods must be used for fence posts, creosote treatment is advisable.

A Farm Manager and a Public Servant

A Visit with John Simmons, Reeve of Middleton—By F. E. Ellis.

THERE is a very common idea that a man cannot fill concurrently the positions of farm manager and township councillor and be successful in both capacities. I am told that in nine cases out of 10, either he will neglect the farm to be a good public servant, or slight his public duties to keep things shipshape at home. In not a few cases that have come under my observation, the rule has held good; and generally it is the farm that has come out the worse for this division of interest. It takes the exception to prove the rule, however, and John Simmons, reeve of the township of Middleton, county of Norfolk, Ont., is one of the exceptions. Mr. Simmons has an advantage in that he has a son, a two-year man from Guelph, who is old enough and able enough to run the farm when his father is away serving the public. Whatever may be the reason, the Simmons farm is well managed, as I had a very good chance to discover during a day's visit in the early part of May this year.

The farm itself is situated right in the village of Courtland. The cement sidewalk runs right up to the farm gate. Mr. Simmons farms 200 acres of land varying from a light, sandy loam to a fairly heavy clay loam. As the farm is a combination of two 100-acre farms, there are two sets of buildings. This is not so convenient as if all buildings were grouped together, but Mr. Simmons is looking ahead to the day when the farm may be again divided, with a son on each. So the buildings have not been grouped together.

The Dairy Herd

A dairy herd of 20 to 25 cows affords the chief source of income. There is not a registered animal in the herd, but there are very few that, on most critical inspection, show grade markings. All are big cows of splendid dairy conformation; as good a commercial herd as anyone could desire. The best index of their quality is the price at which surplus animals are sold. Just recently a buyer paid $125 each for three grade cows and

A Maximum of Freedom With Safety.

Abrogest Bros., Perth Co., Ont., do not believe in confining a herd sire too closely to his box stall. Their great bull, King Segis Alcartra Calamity, a son of King of the Pontiacs, may be here seen exercising in the orchard. His nose ring is attached to a ring which slides freely on an overhead cable running between two apple trees. The trees, incidentally, afford shade on hot days.
—Photo by an Editor of Farm and Dairy

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