



FARM AND DAIRY



We Welcome Practical Progressive Ideas

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

The Recognized Exponent of Dairying in Canada.

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Alfalfa Pointers From Macdonald College

IT is not often that one is glad that he has missed a train, but such was my experience recently at Macdonald College. I had been discussing dairy cattle breeding in Sweden with Mr. Paul A. Boving, just a little too long and although we made the station in record time the train was out a minute ahead of us. When waiting for the next train, which was expected in a few minutes, Mr. Boving made some mention of the work they were doing on the college experimental plots and so interesting did it sound that instead of taking the next train I spent the rest of the day investigating the experimental work being conducted at Macdonald College.

We first inspected some plots designed to show the value of manure in establishing the alfalfa stand. These plots were seeded in the latter part of July the previous summer without a nurse crop. Plot No. 1 showed a splendid stand almost ready for cutting. This plot had been manured previous to seeding. Plot No. 2, next to it, was almost bare. It had been seeded in exactly the same way as plot No. 1, and had received the same cultivation, but the manure had been omitted. Plot No. 3 was the best one of all. "This plot," said Mr. Boving, "was manured previous to seeding and then the stand was top-dressed in the fall. You can see that alfalfa gives good returns for applications of manure both in the size of the crop and in the percentage of the stand."

QUANTITY OF SEED TO SOW

The high price of alfalfa seed made the next series of experiments that I examined the most interesting of all. All of these plots were seeded broadcast with a thin nurse crop, the seedings varying from five to 25 lbs. on the different plots. Plots seeded at the rate of 20 to 25 lbs. of seed were almost equally good, presenting a 100 per cent. stand. When we came to the plot seeded at the rate of 15 lbs. the stand appeared to be very good, but on a closer examination we soon found that it could not be rated better than 60 per cent. Close inspection was not necessary to show that the plots seeded at the rate of 10 lbs. to the acre were thin. Mr. Boving rated this stand at about 40 per cent. Any farmer would have dubbed the five pounds to the acre crop an "absolute failure." "Our experiments have convinced us," said Mr. Boving, "that a seeding of 20 lbs. to the acre is the most advisable."

F. E. ELLIS, B. S. A., EDITOR FARM AND DAIRY

The next proposition that Mr. Boving advanced for my consideration was the advisability of growing alfalfa in drills and cultivating it just as we do corn. "I have always been telling people here that alfalfa should be grown in drills," said Mr. Boving. "We get better results with this method of culture at my home in Sweden than

broadcast. This plot, seeded at the rate of nine pounds drilled, gives as good a stand as 30 lbs. of seed broadcast, and at the same time you have an opportunity to cultivate your soil and improve the land."

This experiment was certainly an eye-opener to me and deserved the commendation that Mr. Boving gave it. One argument in favor of the drill seeding that appealed strongly to me then was its economy of seeding. Alfalfa seed has been scarce and expensive for a couple of years and a method that cuts the seed bill in two is worthy of consideration. Mr. Boving then went on to give me some pointers on the drill method of growing alfalfa.

"These drills," said he, "are a little too far apart. They are 30 inches. For field work this might be reduced to 20 inches if we can get a cultivator to work that narrow. A good rule for the farmer would be for him to find how narrow he can cultivate and then place his drills just that far apart. Land that can be cultivated in this way is cleaner and the alfalfa will maintain its stand for a greater number of years. We have also found here that drilled alfalfa is not nearly so subject to winter killing as alfalfa seeded in the other way, as individual plants are stronger and better able to resist the winter."

DISK THE ALFALFA OUT OF SIGHT

"The next spring after seeding," continued Mr. Boving, "Prof. Klineck who has charge of this work, had the alfalfa cultivated one way and then double disked crosswise of the drills. When this disking was completed our alfalfa plots looked like a fallow field. Uninitiated ones would think that the alfalfa would surely be killed out. On the contrary it did not injure the stand at all, rather it improved it. Likewise it cleaned out every weed. Where kernels were split by the discs they healed and more plants resulted. In Sweden I have given alfalfa two harrowings with a stiff tooth harrow after which not a plant could be seen, but good crops justified the method."

I found Mr. Boving an enthusiastic advocate of the harrow. "Use the harrow every chance you get," said he. "It will cheapen work immensely and save many a crop."

Later in the day Mr. Boving called my attention to other variety experiments with alfalfa. He asked me to look over the best rows and select those which I considered had stood the winter best. Without exception the rows that I



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with broadcasting and there is no reason why the plan should not be equally advisable here. Look at this experiment for instance! In these drills seeded side by side we have used seed at the rate of three, six, nine and 12 lbs. to the acre. There is a good stand on every plot. You will notice that the drills seeded at the rate of three pounds to the acre present almost as good an appearance as the plots seeded at the rate of 15 lbs.