

# THE CANADA FARMER

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NEW SERIES.

## The Field.

### We Want Better Pastures

During the course of our travels through the summer, in different sections of the country, we have observed that there is much yet to be learned by the majority of farmers on the subject of obtaining and keeping up an abundance of grass in what are usually called pasture fields. The common rule of seeding down with a mixture of timothy and clover, and a scant amount of seed to the acre even at the best, then cutting two or three crops of hay, and afterwards leaving the land to be devoted to the pasturage of stock for some years more, may do very well with the common run of farmers, who generally have more land than they have capital either to stock or cultivate properly.

But the matter of stock raising is one that demands a little more attention than has been usually given to it, and in no way can it be made more profitable than by devoting some attention firstly to the procuring of choice breeds of animals to begin with, and secondly, to furnishing them with rich and succulent pastures on which to feed during the summer, such as will keep them in thrifty growing condition all the time, for let it be known that unless an animal is kept in a constant state of progressiveness from birth to maturity every day of its life, it is but a waste of time and labour to attempt to raise stock at all.

Among first class breeders of stock, one of the first objects aimed at in carrying on the cultivation of their farms is that of obtaining a constant supply of thick succulent pasturage during the whole season of grass growth, say from April to December.

The first point necessary to be looked to is to get the land into good heart, and the soil thoroughly mellow and deep. To do this without losing the use of the land, a thick, strong growth of clover makes a good beginning. When the clover has had possession of the soil for two or three years, the roots of the clover plant have thoroughly filled the soil, loosening and mellowing it to a considerable depth, and making it full of material that, on the clover being killed by turning under with the plough, forms, on exposure to air, and decomposition taking place, a great amount of plant food for other grasses. After clover, the land is in good heart for the growth of the finer grasses, the more delicate roots of which can now readily permeate through the finely disintegrated soil.

Now, to get a good stand of grass and a thick sward, we must have a greater variety of grasses than it has yet been the practice to grow in Canada.

Timothy, though unexceptionable for seeding down lands that are to be cut for hay, is by no means so desirable a grass for pasturage. It is a strong grower, with coarse bulbous roots that grow near the surface in small thick tussocks, and allow no other grasses to even fill up the intervening spaces with any degree of success; and besides, it is a grass that, from the conformation of its roots, and habit of growth, is not adapted to do more than give a single heavy growth of leaves and stalks up to the time of seeding, after which its roots seem to require rest, and to be incapable of giving a good growth of aftermath; this makes it undesirable as a pasture grass.

We want some of those grasses that have a habit of spreading through the soil by creeping roots, that give a thick growth of leaves, which are constantly being renewed as they are eaten down by stock.

Among the most desirable of these are Orchard grass, sometimes called Cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), Italian Rye grass (*Lolium Italicum*), Meadow Fescue (*Festuca pratensis*), Oat Grass (*Arrhenatherum avenaceum*), Red-top (*Agrostis vulgaris*), and for soils that have a tendency to retain moisture, especially rich alluvial flats, there is nothing equal to Rib grass, a rather broad-leaved grass which gives a large amount of succulent food that is greatly relished by stock.

There are many other grasses that could be introduced to advantage in a permanent pasture, but we have yet no certain knowledge of their respective merits as regards Canada. In any case, the best plan is to give a liberal supply of seed, and rely on clover to fill out the land for the first year or two, by giving a proportion of clover seed, and as the plants get run out, the other more permanent grasses will fill up the soil.

We have a word to say to our agricultural societies in this matter. As is perhaps pretty well known, our great stock-breeders import their own grass seeds from Britain rather than depend on the mercy of the few seedsmen we have, who, if they do condescend to import any of the best grass seeds from Britain, charge a most exorbitant price therefor, something like 200 to 500 per cent. over cost, which of itself is a great prohibition to the general introduction of new varieties of grasses. Our agricultural societies might do a good service by taking up the matter, and importing largely of grass seeds, at a cost to the farmers of so trifling an amount in comparison with what the seedsmen charge that a great impetus might be given to the introduction of a better system of establishing permanent pastures. Some of our large stock-breeders have already tried several British grasses in seeding their pastures with great ad-