

The Farmer's Advocate and Home Magazine.

"PERSEVERE AND SUCCEED."

ESTABLISHED 1866.

REGISTERED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COPYRIGHT ACT OF 1875.

VOL. XXXVI.

LONDON, ONT., AND WINNIPEG, MAN., AUGUST 1, 1901.

No. 531

EDITORIAL.

Shall We Sow Fall Wheat?

The question whether it is wise for farmers in the sections of the country in which winter wheat has formerly been successfully grown to continue to sow it, in the face of the invasion of the Hessian fly, which in many districts has this year been so very destructive, is a problem which calls for serious consideration at the present time. While it is true that with the market prices at present and for some years past prevailing there has been little if any profit in this crop, and, owing to the constant widening of the world's wheat field, little prospect of improvement in price in the future, yet we are by no means disposed to take a pessimistic view of the situation or to seek to discourage farmers from growing, to a limited extent, this the most pleasant of all farm crops to handle. The preparation of the land for the crop and the seed-sowing comes in at a time when the work interferes little with other operations on the farm, and the same may be said of the harvesting. It is certainly the best of all grain crops in the average of seasons with which to secure a catch of clover and grass seeds, and hence takes a convenient and useful place in a rotation having in view the maintenance of the fertility of the farm. It is a crop that has successfully run the gauntlet of many insect and other enemies in its past history, including its latest foe, the Hessian fly, which has come and gone in former years, returning recently to the attack with renewed vigor, but which, we are confident, can, by intelligent management, be out-generated and vanquished from the field. Scientists who have studied the life-history of the fly assure us that its eggs are laid in the latter half of August and the first three weeks of September, and this fact suggests the most feasible means of checking and cheating the pest, which is to delay the seeding until the female flies have laid their eggs elsewhere and have perished from the effects of frost or reached the limit of life. The objection to late seeding in dry autumns is that the plants in average seasons fail to secure sufficient strength and vigor to withstand the severe frosts of winter, but we submit that it is worth considering whether, if the preparation of the land were commenced early and frequent surface cultivation given it, especially after any showers of rain that may fall, sufficient moisture may not be retained and the mechanical condition of the soil made such that the germination of the seed and the growth of the plant may be hastened, though later started, and thus rendered quite as strong at the approach of winter as under the former practice of sowing earlier in a drier and less-prepared seed-bed. Early sowing, when the fall months prove moist and warm, is often fatal to the wheat crop, the growth of top being so great that it rots under the winter covering of snow and proves a failure, and the richer the land and the more perfect the preparation, the more likely is failure from this cause to be experienced. If, as seems highly probable, the secret of success in evading the attack of the fly lies in the management of the soil and the time of seeding, it would seem the part of wisdom to endeavor to find the happy medium, the dividing line 'twixt failure and fortune, and to follow that line. This, together with the sowing of clean, plump and well-selected seed of a variety that has been tested and proven suitable to the soil and climatic conditions of the section, should make the cultivation of the crop a fairly safe venture where it has at any time succeeded. It has been suggested that by sowing narrow strips on each side of the field, about the first of September, and plowing these down after the flies have laid their eggs and before the later sowing has advanced far enough to

be attacked, a large percentage of the larvae may be destroyed. This expedient may be well worth trying, as it is not expensive or unreasonable. If one were giving advice, it would doubtless be safe to admonish the sowing of less land than usual to wheat, sowing somewhat later than has been the rule, and only on good land in a well-prepared condition, that is well pulverized and compacted. To sow early or on unfit and ill-prepared ground, is to court probable failure and disappointment through the loss of the seed and the labor expended, while furnishing food for the perpetuation of the insect pest.

Farmers Should Raise More Hogs.

We hear of little or no surprise, nor should we, that good horses are becoming scarce and dear. The "Farmer's Advocate" and others who read the signs of the times aright, endeavored to awaken horse-breeders years ago to the wisdom of keeping their good brood mares raising foals as fast as possible, and those who did so are now reaping a rich reward. The same may be said of the hog-breeders, both in Canada and the United States, where there exists a real shortage of hogs in spite of the fact that for over a year the prices paid by the packing-houses for live hogs have been well above the danger line of no profit. It is more than fifteen months since the prices paid in Toronto, the main Canadian market, reached \$6.00 per cwt. for bacon hogs, and for only a few weeks during last fall and early winter did the price go below that figure, falling to \$1.75 for one or two days in November, but going again to \$5.75 almost immediately. Since the beginning of 1901 the price has gone steadily forward, with only slight and temporary retractions, until the present high price of over \$7.00 per cwt. was reached. There is considerable difference of opinion as to the real cause of the increasing price, some attributing it to a united determination of the older-established packing-houses to tire out the farmers' co-operative companies; while others say the packers can make some money at these prices and need hogs badly to keep their curing-houses engaged. The packers themselves claim that the prices are much higher than the British markets will warrant, which makes it appear that there is some ground for the tiring-out theory. At any rate, there is a shortage of hogs, and the price is good both here and in the States, so we may rest assured that it will pay to put more sows into the breeding pens until enough hogs are being produced to keep the packing-houses running full time with a fair supply continuously. At present, in spite of the increasing prices for over a year, many of the houses are running away below their capacity, which renders their curing relatively expensive. In the Chicago market, the great meat center of the U. S. republic, only for a short time in January, 1900, was the price for the best qualities below \$5 per cwt. alive, during the whole year, while since January, 1901, the figures have ranged from \$5.40 to \$6.50 per cwt., so that it would seem that the demand for pork products is increasing at a relatively greater rate than the supply. It is true that disease has had a telling effect upon many American and some Canadian herds, and perhaps a shortage of coarse grains may have reduced the number of hogs raised, but in this country, with judicious treatment and the knowledge our farmers have of the value of roots and other cheap wholesome foods, along with dairy by-products, there is very little

occasion to hesitate in keeping a half dozen or more sows at work producing litters to go off every month or two throughout the year. Judicious care of the in-pig sows, especially in the winter season as spring approaches, is an important factor, and no doubt a lack of this, causing heavy losses of litters last spring, is to a considerable extent responsible for the shortage of store hogs now existing throughout the country.

While prices are high, from a keen, indiscriminating demand, there is, unfortunately, little probability of hog-raisers paying the careful attention they should to the best type of sows and boars to use for the good of the Canadian trade, but it so happens that the best bacon types are also most prolific and healthy, so that this part of the industry will tend to look after itself fairly well. The American type—short and thick—is becoming a shy breeder and less vigorous than they were several years ago. When the sows of any thick breed are stretched out by selection and careful feeding, coupled with plenty of exercise, they answer fairly well for bacon production, so that it is not really necessary for those who have been in the habit of breeding the fat-backed breeds to put them entirely away, but while the price is high for commercial hogs of all classes, it is a good time to select and discard with a free hand, in preparation for a more discriminating state of the trade. To those who have not bred hogs and have no established prejudices we would point out that the packers (and they are the fellows we have to depend on) have least fault to find with Tamworths and Yorkshires and little to say against the lengthy type of Berkshires, but even these should all be selected for best results. Mr. E. D. Tillson, who raises several hundred hogs of best quality a year, keeps almost entirely pure-bred Yorkshires, while Mr. David Lawrence, an extensive bacon-hog producer, pins his faith to the Tamworth sow and Berkshire boar. Both these men rear large litters, usually two each year for every sow, and get top prices for their pigs at seven or eight months old. They, however, take the wise precaution, which is also cheap, to keep the sows in rather thin but vigorous condition by liberal exercise and coarse fodder.

In selecting a brood sow, it is well to take some pains to select from the progeny of a producer of large litters of right type. From seven to ten weeks old is a good time to make the choice, and it is not always the largest at that age that turns out best as a breeder. See that she is lengthy, rather smooth over the shoulder, possesses a dozen teats, and looks out well for number one at feeding time. Keep her growing along well, with plenty of outdoor life, green feed and some grain, to build up a hardy constitution. In our judgment, she should not in any case be bred before she is eight months old, so as to produce her first litter at one year old, and many successful hog-raisers prefer their sows to retain their virginity until ten months have been reached. After being bred, the same cheap feeding and liberal exercise may be administered, the aim being to promote growth without fattening, as fat sows usually have small litters and are more liable to accidents with their young.

"Farming is a great science, isn't it?" "Say, my friend, it's more than that; it's a composite of many sciences. For instance, to-day, in the ordinary course of my agricultural duties I had to practice chiropody." "How was that?" "Why, cut the corn on the foot of the hill."