

### Care of Alfalfa.

#### Agricultural College Expert Tells How It Should Be Done.

Alfalfa leads the list of forage crops in New Mexico. It forms one of the principal sources of revenue to the farmer of this section. Thousands of tons are shipped annually and it forms the bulk of the food for stock throughout this region. Other crops are giving place to it slowly but surely. The acreage in some sections is simply enormous.

So long as present prices rule, alfalfa will continue to be the dominant crop and the acreage may be expected to increase. The profit in growing alfalfa at present prices, reckoning cost of production and interest upon the investment, is such as to draw even the amateur into somewhat extensive operations.

These substantial profits, which have been realized for a number of years, has, it is believed led to considerable carelessness and lack of diligence on the part of the farmer in the care of alfalfa fields. Alfalfa is grown with the greatest of ease and even in careless hands a field not too old returns a fair profit. But the time may be expected to come when there will be a somewhat sharper competition than is felt at the present time. The writer does not wish to give the impression that the farmer and ranchman will be driven out of the business, but believes that more study and care will be demanded if the present rate of profit is to continue.

One can hardly pass through a field without noticing the bare spots and soddy patches. The alfalfa has been drowned out or otherwise mishandled, and the aggressive native grasses have taken its place. No one will contend for a moment that these grasses are equal to alfalfa. They sap the soil and encroach upon the alfalfa plants. The bare spots are objectionable, popular opinion to the contrary. Very coarse, woody alfalfa does not bring so good a price nor find so ready a sale as fine alfalfa. As competition increases greater discrimination may be expected in this line, and the matter will be forced upon the alfalfa grower in a way that will command his attention.

It is not an extremely difficult matter to prevent the bare spots and the encroachment of wild grasses. Preventive measures will largely do away with this difficulty and prompt attention may be expected to eradicate the evils entirely.

Among the preventive means the following may be mentioned:

First, thorough preparation of the land before seeding. The land should be perfectly level and properly bordered, so that the water can be easily controlled.

Second, a perfect seed bed should be formed, so that the maximum germination may be reached.

Third, enough seed should be sown per acre to insure a perfect stand, even under somewhat adverse circumstances, should they appear; also the nurse crop, if one is used, should be chosen with discrimination.

Fourth, the time of seeding should be that which has proven to be best throughout a long period of time.

Fifth, the irrigation should be carried on with care as to season and frequency on the particular soil to be handled and the way the water is applied to all portions of the field. Alfalfa is very susceptible to injury from standing water during hot weather, and, therefore, the greatest care should be exercised to prevent water from standing too long on low-lying portions of the field.

Sixth, never pasture short, especially in the winter. Alfalfa has wonderful recuperative powers, but continuous nipping off of the crowns will damage the plants and eventually decrease the yield not a little. Horses are particularly hard on alfalfa fields used as winter pastures because they are able to crop close and not infrequently paw loose dirt away from the plants and bite off crowns one-fourth and even one-half inch below the surface of the ground. It is not hard to understand that the loss of the bud or growing point may be detrimental to the growth and usefulness of the plants, causing many to die and resulting in bare spots later to be overgrown by obnoxious grasses.

After the damage is done there remains no remedy but to plow up the field and reseed, or to disc thoroughly and to reseed the bare spots. If the field has not deteriorated too much

the latter is much to be preferred.

By diligent and careful handling, or prompt action closely following any encroachments upon the life of the plants, the quality and yield of alfalfa may be maintained and the profits relatively enhanced.

J. J. VERNON.

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### The Cow Pea.

The Tulare Register is gathering all the information obtainable about different forage plants and has this to say about the Cow Pea:

"The Register foresees that the pressing need of this season at least, and probably other seasons to come, is the ability to produce a large amount of feed for animals with little water and on a small area of land. We have talked sorghum and Indian corn and now broach the subject of the cow pea.

"The cow pea furnishes practically the hay crop of the south and, from Mr. Lang, who has recently come among us from southeastern Missouri, we learn the following facts in regard to this provender.

"With enough moisture to bring the pea up it will produce a crop without a great deal of water, drawing its sustenance greatly from the air. It will produce from a ton to 2½ tons per acre, a crop can be produced in 30 days from seeding. If cut and cured when half the pods are ripe it makes a well balanced dairy ration, a little strong on the fat side, and so would feed splendidly with

a falfa. It is great stuff for hogs, if irrigated after cutting will doubtless furnish pasturage here and is a fine fertilizer for the land, filling it with a multitude of little roots that store nitrogen in the soil.

"There is no seed to be had in this country now, and it is high in the east, being quoted at \$1.90 per bushel in Missouri, but if a number were to club together at once and send for a ton or two the cost for a starter would not be excessive. A bushel is required to seed an acre, and a bushel weighs 60 pounds. The cow pea should be sown when frosts are out of the way, in the latter part of March or first of April, and it is possible that spring rains may be sufficient to make a crop without irrigation.

"The peas are threshed with a separator with the cylinder slowed down to 900 revolutions so as not to split the peas. It will be profitable for some years to grow the peas and thresh them to supply the local demand for seed.

"It will pay farmers and dairymen to look this matter up and do it at once. If you want to join in sending for seed come to The Register office and say so. Perhaps an order can be made up at once."

### Growing Luxuriantly.

Mr. T. P. Banta arrived from Imperial, Cal., yesterday for a few days' visit in Mesa and the valley. He brought over some samples of barley that is growing under the Imperial canal. The bunches are fine specimens of grain and stand about three and a half feet tall. The grain was planted the latter part of October of last year,

and he says it is growing luxuriantly wherever planted.—Phoenix, Arizona, Republican.

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