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Agricultural Experimentation in Box Butte County

PROF. E. W. HUNT,
DIRECTOR

A GOOD FEATURE

Editor Mark of the Mitchell Index sends us the following communication regarding the agricultural matter that is being published in The Herald each week by Prof. Hunt. The letter reads as follows:

Mitchell, Nebr., June 7, 1909.

Jno. W. Thomas,
Alliance, Nebr.

Dear Sir:—

I thank you very much for your kindness in sending copies of The Herald and for arranging so that I can have the articles written by Prof. Hunt for The Herald. I was so situated last week that I could not possibly get the article in type, but I hope to be able to publish them right along hereafter and I believe they will be much appreciated. I think you have certainly hit upon a good feature for your section and it should make The Herald sought by all in Box Butte county and other sections where farming is done without irrigation.

Truly yours,

G. E. MARK.

Alfalfa

Mr. W. R. Mellor is the right man in the right place. He is secretary of the state board of agriculture and is making that organization an active, efficient power in promoting the best interests of agriculture in Nebraska. The time has been when critics declared that the state board of agriculture was misnamed; that it should be called the state fair board because it did nothing but run the state fair and had no immediate relation to agriculture. Mr. Mellor is changing all this and is completely disarming all criticism. During the present year he has secured from competent men short treatises of an intensely practical nature on subjects immediately connected with agriculture and has had them distributed widely throughout the state. The stimulus that is being given by this means to agriculture cannot be over estimated. We sincerely hope that Mr. Mellor will succeed in making this line of work permanent in the state and in making the state board of agriculture the most active and efficient help to the farmers of the state. As an indication of what Mr. Mellor is doing we are glad to publish herewith his bulletin just received on the above named subject:

It is no easy matter when discussing any farm subject, to couch it in such language as to apply to the whole state of Nebraska, which has such a variety of soil and climatic conditions, with difference of altitude and western parts of the state, that the proper application in one section of the state does not, oftentimes, produce satisfactory results in another.

Alfalfa is fast becoming one of the valuable crops of our state, many believe that it solves the problem for the maintenance of a dense population in the future Nebraska, as the conditions of its growth are here ideal. By consulting the report of the Bureau of Statistics we find that the total number of tons grown in 1904 was 744,420 which in 1908 was increased to 1,846,703 or more than 248 per cent. Mr. Hull says: It is no longer necessary to argue the question with the Nebraska farmer, as to the feeding value of alfalfa, for its merits in this regard are admitted by all. Neither will it be necessary to use any argument with the up-to-date farmer in convincing him of the value of this crop in helping to maintain the fertility of the soil; as nearly every community in which alfalfa has been grown for any length of time has furnished a practical demonstration of the value of raising potatoes, or corn, following the plowing under of the alfalfa. Both of these questions have been so thoroughly settled in the school of actual experience that no argument will make the proof stronger. The only question that is to be settled is, how can we in

the easiest and surest way, come in possession of this valuable plant.

First in importance is the procuring of good home grown seed. We do not hesitate to say that more farmers have been discouraged and deterred from growing alfalfa from having sown seed grown in Utah or New Mexico, or some place too far south and where it was grown under irrigation. This seed looks much finer than the home grown, and will grow all right, but the first winter will kill a large per cent. of it. Then, if the experiment is being tried in a section where alfalfa is little grown, the man is ready to blame it to his soil, or anything but the real cause, which was seed unacclimated.

The time of seeding will depend on the part of the state you live in. From the center of the state west, we would advise spring seeding. If spring seeding is desired, then we should prefer that the land should have been in corn the previous year and well tilled. Then commence in the spring as soon as the ground is in condition to work well, and thoroughly disc the land, lapping the disc one-half. Then as often as it rains and packs the ground, or if the weeds start, either harrow, or disc again. Keep up this cultivation until the first of fifteenth of June. You will by this means have sprouted and destroyed a large part of the weeds and conserved the moisture, and prepared the land in fine physical condition to receive the seed. Sow twenty pounds per acre. The seed may be sown with a broadcast seeder, by hand, or may be drilled in; whatever the method, extreme care should be exercised to distribute the seed evenly and not to cover it too deeply. One objection in using the drill is that the seed is usually put in too deep, and comes up poorly. The wheelbarrow gross seeder is one of the best implements for the purpose.

Thoroughly harrow, and you will have no more trouble to get a stand of alfalfa, than of wheat or oats.

If fall seeding is desired, then the land should be sown to small grain the year you intend to seed alfalfa.

When cutting the grain you should follow the harvester with the disc, as this will conserve the moisture, and put the land in shape to plow later on. We do not think it best to plow very deep, but thoroughly turn and pulverize the soil. This can be done by using an extra horse in your team attaching one section of the harrow behind the plow, which harrows each furrow two or three times, fining and firming the soil, leaving it in excellent condition for seeding. Some farmers say not to be in a hurry to seed unless there is plenty of moisture, but we believe it advisable to sow and harrow at once, not waiting for moisture, for when the seed is properly in the ground it will come up after the first rains. Try to sow in August. Seeding after September 1st will not make as vigorous a growth during the fall as the earlier seeding and is more apt to be winter killed, and is likely to keep you home from the State Fair which occurs this year, September 6th to 10th.

In spring sows alfalfa it is usually necessary to mow the weeds once or twice

the first year; in doing so, be careful not to set the sickle bar too low, but leave some of the leaves on the plant, or you will kill a number of the plants.

A light top dressing of well rotted stable manure, about 10 loads per acre, will be a great factor in aiding to start alfalfa, in fact we would strongly urge that all land to be sown to alfalfa be well manured prior to its preparation.

Alfalfa should be cut as soon as the first bloom begins to appear, for at that stage there is less woody fibre to the stem, hence less waste. The greatest difficulty in eastern Nebraska, in the handling of alfalfa, when cut, is to get it up without discoloring. A method of handling the crop which has given good satisfaction to a number of our farmers, is to cut the alfalfa in the morning as soon as the dew is off, allow it to remain in the swath as late in the afternoon as possible and yet get it raked before the evening dews fall, and then put it in tall cocks, if it looks like rain, otherwise leave it in the winrow over night. If the next day is sunshiny, the hay is scattered after the dew is off, allowed to dry until late afternoon, and put in stack or barn. This method of handling insures a bright, green color so desirable in the merchantable article. Care must be exercised, however, as hay put in the barn or stack when only partially cured is likely to mould or char and be dusty, so as to make it practically unsalable, and in some cases sufficient heat is generated to ignite.

Immediately after taking the hay from the field, thoroughly disc the field with a barrow tooth disc if you have or can get one, and if not, with an ordinary disc well weighted and set nearly straight. This will give the ground a cultivation, kill weeds, sand burrs and grass and not injure alfalfa if more than one year old. Do not cultivate the first year.

Save the second crop for seed. The fields in western Nebraska are very favorably located for a seed crop and oftentimes such a crop is very profitable. We do not think it profitable to pasture alfalfa except with hogs. When hogs are pastured, feed but a very small ration of grain twice a day. Do not feed work horses too much; however, a limited feed of alfalfa is good for them. If a horse is given all he will eat, he will eat too much, but there is no better hay to feed to young colts or milk cows.

If we have been correctly informed the writer of the above bulletin resides in the Republican valley. If this is true his remarks while were very opportune and reliable in most particulars can hardly be literally adopted for extreme western Nebraska. The part of the Republican valley referred to is in central Nebraska and everything said in the pamphlet is true with reference to that locality. We are inclined to offer the suggestion that with reference to Box Butte county with its climatic and soil conditions it may not be well to sow more than twelve pounds of germinative seed to the acre. With this possible exception we commend the whole article to our readers as entirely reliable.

Save the Moisture

We have had a bountiful rain; the soil was never in a better condition for producing a large crop than it is at present; moisture enough has been deposited to mature almost any crop if properly taken care of and saved. At this altitude and in this latitude evaporation is very rapid. If the wind blows a little the rate of evaporation is doubled or nearly so. The thing to be done is to prevent the wind from coming in contact with the part of the soil that is charged with moisture. It is generally well known that when rain falls upon the earth the water drawn by gravity sinks until the force of gravity is overcome by the force of capillary attraction, then the water begins to rise towards the surface. If the ground is solid to the surface, the pores in such solid ground are small and the force of capillary attraction can bring water to the top of the ground. Capillarity will raise the water as far as the ground is solid enough to make the inter-pore spaces small. If the surface of the ground is loosened and stirred the water will rise to the level of the solid ground but will stop where the stirred ground begins because the pore spaces have been made consequently larger. To save the moisture then, stir the surface.

Small grain especially just now is in need of this at once. Owing to the late rains a crust has been formed over the top of the ground which is a double disadvantage to growing crops. In the first place it prevents the air from reaching the roots of the plant through the pore spaces and they suffer from lack of oxygen. Air is as necessary to plant roots as it is to the part of the plant above the ground. To deprive it of air is to retard if not ultimately to entirely prevent growth. In the next place this crust permits water to come to the surface where between the action of the sun and winds it is rapidly evaporated. Scientists estimate that in weather favorable to evaporation one hundred tons of water may be evaporated in forty-eight hours. This, to say the least, is one quarter of the

amount of water required for maturing the average crop. This may be prevented and air admitted to the roots of plants by stirring the surface of the soil.

For this purpose I know of no implement that will do as good work as a Hallock riding weeder. This tool is constructed with long flexible teeth and will pass through a growing crop of small grain completely destroying young weeds, loosening the ground to a depth sufficient to prevent excessive evaporation, and cultivating the growing plant. In severity it is much to be preferred to the harrow. The harrow tears and mutilates so much of the growing crop as nearly to cripple it. I am satisfied that, on the ordinary farm with the ordinary small grain acreage, a Hallock weeder will more than pay for itself the first season.

Just at this time it is the best possible tool to use on the ground that has been planted to potatoes and on corn ground whether listed or checked. If any will take the trouble to examine the soil he will find just beneath the surface thousands of small weeds that have just started to grow but have not yet reached the light. The weeder will effectually destroy these. It will pass through a hill of corn eradicating all the weeds and not injuring the stock. To do full justice to the growing potato or corn crop it should be gone over twice each week with a weeder. The farmer who does this will be surprised at the effective work it does against the weeds. Weeds rob the soil of moisture and of plant food needed for the growing crop and it is necessary for the greatest production to get rid of them entirely. No one can raise a strong crop of both weeds and potatoes or corn on the same ground. We must keep down the weeds or the weeds will keep down the crop. The best implement for this is the weeder of which I spoke.

Most of the farmers realize the truth of what I have said but say that they have not time to do it, that they are overrun with work as it is. I commend to the notice of such farmers that old proverb of biting off more than they can chew. If agriculture is to succeed here, or anywhere else for that matter, the work must be thoroughly and well done. No one should undertake to do more than he can do well, and here where soil and climatic conditions are generally supposed to be adverse this is especially true. The farmer, who at present has more than he can do to give proper attention to his growing crops, would make money by hiring the necessary labor and the next year undertake no more than he can do and do well.

If the moisture is to be conserved the surface of the ground must be broken at once. If there is only a few days delay a large portion of the moisture will be lost before anything is done to prevent the loss.

Potato Diseases in Northwestern Nebraska

(From Gordon Journal, June 4.)

Dr. E. Mead Wilcox, the state botanist of Lincoln, and Mr. E. W. Hunt of Alliance were in Gordon Saturday holding a potato growers meeting for the purpose of explaining to the farmers some of the recent work done by Dr. Wilcox in his investigation of potato diseases in this region. As a result of the work up to date he has been able to isolate the fungus causing this common form of dry rot in northwestern Nebraska and to develop methods of control, which if followed this fall by the farmers, will enable them to send clean, healthy potatoes to market. The situation is serious but demands simply the efforts of those interested to bring clear skies for the market of northwestern Nebraska spuds. What is needed now is the united effort of all growers in employing better methods of harvesting and marketing their crop. The fungus responsible for the dry rot can enter only wounded or bruised potatoes. This points towards the use of more careful methods of handling the crop. Wounded and dry rot potatoes should never find their way into spuds sent to market. The people must establish a market and guarantee the quality of the potatoes which they sell. It is likely that this result can best be secured through the organization of an association to inspect and then stand back of the potatoes that are shipped from this point. There is no danger of an overproduction of high grade potatoes. The danger to this region lies in the very shortsighted practice of selling without reference to the future effect upon the market. Even now some of the large buyers in larger cities are rather cautious as to buying spuds from this region. Dr. Wilcox is very desirous of entering into correspondence with everyone growing potatoes in this region and

would be glad to have all such write to him at either Lincoln or Alliance asking for any information on potato growing they wish. At the same time he will be glad to furnish franked tags to enable a person to send specimens of diseased potatoes to him for study.

For the Dairymen

Dairying will certainly become the leading industry of this part of the state. It may not take the lead next year or the year after but ultimately, that is in twenty-five years it will take its place in the front rank of Box Butte industries. It is coming to be seen that men cannot profitably raise beef cattle on wild grass pasture when land is worth \$30 per acre or more. Already the dairy industry is making rapid strides. It is well known that during the dry years of the 90's this country would have been depopulated but for the dairy cow. Some idea of the importance of the industry may be gained from the fact that last year the Alliance Creamery alone during the first year of its operation paid out more than \$40,000 for cream from this part of the country. From present indications the Alliance Creamery will pay nearly, if not quite, double the above amount for cream during the current year and it is expected that the other creameries in operation here will do fully as well. These figures show the growing importance of dairying as a business.

Those who have the program for the cattlemen's convention in charge have secured Prof. A. L. Haecker of the experiment station for an address on "Cream Production." Prof. Haecker is one of the most expert scientific dairymen in the country. His success at the experiment station with the dairy is unprecedented in the record of experiment stations in the United States. He understands the business from beginning to end, both practically and commercially, and the dairymen of Box Butte county are to be congratulated on having the opportunity offered for hearing him on his special subject. It is to be hoped that dairying will be stimulated and systematized and made economically profitable for the farmers of Box Butte county by hearing what Prof. Haecker has to say and putting his suggestions into immediate practice. No one should fail to hear this address.

Corn Growers Have Chance

Any farmer will have a chance to win prizes since the winners of the 1907 and 1908 sweepstakes have been eliminated from entering the regular classes at the next corn show.

In addition to this the exposition will give no cash prize of \$1,000 to the winner of the Grand Champion sweepstakes—the grand premier trophy being considered sufficient reward together with the honor of winning the prize.

Instead of the \$1,000 cash prize for the champion sweepstakes, three sweepstakes prizes have been arranged, giving one to each of the best ten ears of yellow, white and other than yellow or white, which includes flint, red and calico varieties.

These changes were decided on at a meeting of the executive committee of the exposition and vice presidents of the National Corn Association, held in Omaha last week.

The management has also decided that all exhibits must be in Omaha at the office of a transportation company or on the exposition grounds by November 27th, ten days before the exposition opens. The 1909 exposition, which is to be held in Omaha December 6 to 18 is to be an exposition that is "ready."

Notice to Tax Payers

You are hereby notified that the Board of County Commissioners will meet as a Board of Equalization, at the court house, in Alliance, Nebraska, June 15th, 1909, and remain in session for three days, at least, for the purpose of hearing complaints, adjusting and equalizing assessments.

W. C. MOUNTS,
County Clerk.

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