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The Making of New Grassland

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Account of the Discussion

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THE DISCUSSION

PROFESSOR ENGLEDDOW (Cambridge) opened the discussion by summing up the points on which further information from practical men was necessary. Most speakers had agreed on the necessity for a firm seed bed, the management of the nurse crop, and the time of sowing; whereas on the question as to whether the seed bed must be clear or whether it was possible to succeed on foul land there was some difference of opinion. It was important that this matter should be cleared up. The place of cocksfoot in grassland husbandry was another disputed point. Dealing with the question of indigenous strains, Professor Engledow said that the collection of the experience of farmers who had grown both types of seed side by side would be very useful.

Mr CLAYTON urged farmers to consider the composition of their seed mixtures in relation to their productivity over a period of years rather than to order, as frequently happened, the cheapest mixture which the seedsman could provide. He feared that their seedings as advocated by some speakers might lead to the new pastures being colonized by weeds instead of by desirable indigenous grasses and clovers.

Mr HAWKINS (East Anglian Institute of Agriculture), discussing the cocksfoot question, stated that one of his fields which was full of clumps of cocksfoot was examined by three different observers. One said that too much cocksfoot had been sown, another too little, and the third that the wrong strain of cocksfoot had been used. In view of the great difference which exists between strains of this grass the last opinion was the most likely.

Mr H. B. TURNER (Essex) said that he had been more successful with his grassland since adopting the indigenous strains. For grazing he advocated leafy types of cocksfoot and ryegrass and good strains of late-flowering red clover, the latter being essential for the first year. He regarded crested dog's-tail as an insurance against drought in his part of Essex, where it provided excellent grazing for sheep. Laying the land in ridges, and where necessary drawing a mole drain down the furrow, was a cheap method of drainage.

Sir ROBERT GREIG urged the necessity of further work to explain the diversity of opinion which existed on certain points. When this had been done we could expect great improvements in grass husbandry. He drew attention to the great increase in productivity obtainable by good after-management, and illustrated this by results obtained on certain of Mr Cruickshank's fields. He supported

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Mr Cruickshank's opinion that cutting for hay in the first two years was the best way of establishing pasture under the conditions prevailing in that district.

Professor H. E. ARMSTRONG emphasized the need of a careful study of the feeding value of grass, as well as the milk and other products derived from grass.

Sir DANIEL HALL, in closing the discussion, said that some of the divergencies noted in the course of the Conference arose out of soil and climatic differences, but there was also the possibility that different means would lead to the same end. He advocated the substitution of the idea of semi-permanent grass in place of permanent pasture, for the occasional use of the plough was very beneficial. The simplification of seed mixtures was a development which was steadily gaining ground. The use of nitrogenous manures at critical periods was a further valuable development. When nitrogen was applied in spring, grasses and clovers benefited alike. The mowing of pastures to remove grass which had grown past the stock was a sound and valuable practice. Finally, more important even than seeding and manuring was after-management, which was responsible for the final result.

Communicated by JOHN B. BARR, Cornhill-on-Tweed

The longer the land is under tillage before the grass seeds are sown the better; say for a period of six years or more. Roll before sowing and use fairly heavy seed-harrows to ensure that the larger seeds are properly buried, although by doing so some of the smaller seeds may be buried too deeply. Roll well to finish off with.

After the corn crop has been removed give a dressing of a suitable manure. In this district 6 cwt. of a mixture made up of 4 parts of North African phosphate to 1 part of potash salts gives good results, followed up with further dressings every three years or so.

The first year I prefer to graze lightly with ewes and lambs till about 1st May, then take a light crop of hay, taking care to mow early.

The second year and afterwards I prefer to stock with two-thirds cattle and one-third sheep.

The best pastures about here carry, say, on a thirty-acre field 20 to 24 cattle and 30 ewes and twin lambs. After shearing time just one lamb to the acre, but the same number of cattle is usually carried to the end of the season. The mower may be used occasionally in parts of the field not so well grazed as it should be.

It seems a great mistake to overgraze cocksfoot the first year. A few years ago we had a backward spring, with keep very scarce. I overgrazed a field with sheep and the cocksfoot disappeared entirely.

Our pasturelands, when suitably manured and attended to, seem

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to offer scope for a profitable increased production more than any other line in farming at the present time.

Communicated by Mr J. ELWORTHY, Hemel Hempstead

It is said that cutting a pasture in the early stages tends to spoil the wild white clover. One of my new grass fields I have cut in the early years, another I have grazed; from each I have harvested 112 lb. of wild white clover seed per acre within three years of the grass being laid down. The mown pasture had been cut every year between original seeding and being cut for clover seed. This suggests that in my heavy land clover will not be suppressed.