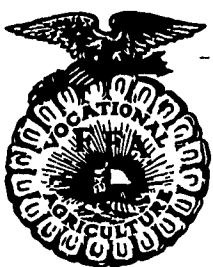


From Local Ag Teachers:



Thoughts in Passing



Editor's Note: "Can you afford to put your hay crop second?" is the third of many articles in a special column written by various agriculture teachers in our service area. Designed to be of interest to and have educational value for all farm people, the articles offer an opportunity for the farm community to become better acquainted with the teachers and for them to express their own interest in the local agricultural community.

**By Donald Robinson,
Adult Farmer Advisor,
Eastern Lancaster Co.
School District**

When we see alfalfa hay prices go over \$60 a ton at local sales and a lot of our Lancaster County land has the potential of over six tons per acre, can we afford to put off making hay in order to plant corn?

The keys to top alfalfa production are attention to details, doing what needs to be done WHEN it should be done.

What needs to be done?

1. Select a variety for your soil and cropping situation. If you have a north slope or fields that freeze out on you and you desire long rotations, go with the winter hardy, high yielding variety-Iroquois.

If you are shooting for shorter rotations with highest yield

Last Request

Andrew Johnson, 17th U.S. president, was buried wrapped in the Stars and Stripes, with a copy of the Constitution under his head. The patriot's last request was "Pillow my head on the Constitution of my country. Let the flag of the nation be my winding sheet."

potential, quick regrowth and early maturity, use Saranac or Promor variety.

2. Establish well—either Fall or Spring seedings can be successfully established.

Prepare a firm seedbed; those alfalfa seeds are very small; if they don't get in firm contact with the soil, you'll have trouble. Cultipack before and after seeding if necessary to get firm.

Of course, you should fertilize to soil test recommendations before seeding, and don't skimp on the lime or potash.

3. Control grass weeds before seeding with an incorporated herbicide. Broadleaf weeds can be controlled when the alfalfa plant forms the first trifoliate leaves. Don't cut corners and say they'll get shaded out after the first cutting.

4. Maintain once established. Top dress annually with 0-80-240 with boron. We recommend split applications, 400 pounds of 0-10-30 after first cutting, and 400 pounds of 0-10-30 after third or fourth cutting, and be sure to maintain a pH above 6.8, with necessary lime applications.

5. Control insects. When you saw the weevil eating leaves, you sprayed to control him. Now you aren't bothered much with the weevil so you figure you have no problems.

But very few alfalfa fields are not reduced in yield because of the leafhopper. And most of you argue that you don't see him or his damage. That's because most of you don't know how to catch him or identify him once you have caught him.



Donald Robinson

Sweep the top of your alfalfa with you hat, look real quick for a tiny, thin, pale green insect that will most likely hop or fly away immediately. The adult spittle bug is often confused with the leafhopper, but his is larger and more brownish. Aphids are small and green but more roundish and won't fly away.

Chances are you won't find leafhoppers on the first cutting. They come into the area after the middle of June when the weather is warmer.

If you catch one or two hoppers in 10 sweeps, it is time to spray.

Their damage is done by sucking juices from the plant, no holes will be in the leaves. Symptoms of damage are stunted growth you usually blame on the weather, later on crop will begin to yellow. Slow regrowth after cutting is often present.

You must control this insect if you are going to realize top production.

6. Time of harvest. It's hard to convince farmers that first cutting alfalfa, cut a the proper stage of maturity, full bud, and even lightly rained on, will produce hay with more feeding

value then the same hay allowed to go 10 more days till the weather is "just right." But if you get in the habit of getting you hay analyzed for protein and TDN, you will soon realize this.

In addition to loss of feeding value while waiting, you are losing those days of regrowth and pushing each successive cutting later. Other cuttings should be harvested at EARLY bloom (about 35 days later).

7. To prevent freeze out or winter damage do not harvest last cutting between September 15 and a killing frost. After frost, cuttings should be made by leaving at least 4 inches of stubble. Purpose for waiting is to allow root reserves to be built up so plant can overwinter and

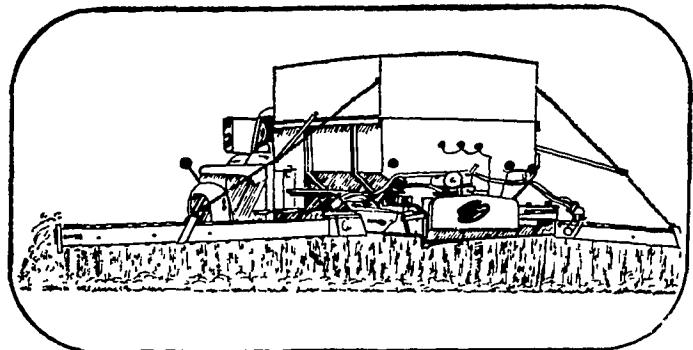
survive the freezing and thawing of the ground.

For details on herbicides, insecticides, or fertilizers, check with your local agriculture department or county Extension agent. Attend the winter meetings of Young Farmers, Extension meetings, and commercial dealers.

But don't wait until June to put these ideas into practice. The beginning of top yields are being made now by purchasing the needed materials so you won't have to wait on them later when you have to move. Be ready to go when the time is right.

Six tons at \$60 per ton is a lot of return per acre, but you won't get it by treating your hay crop second best.

APPLY LIME ON FROZEN GROUND



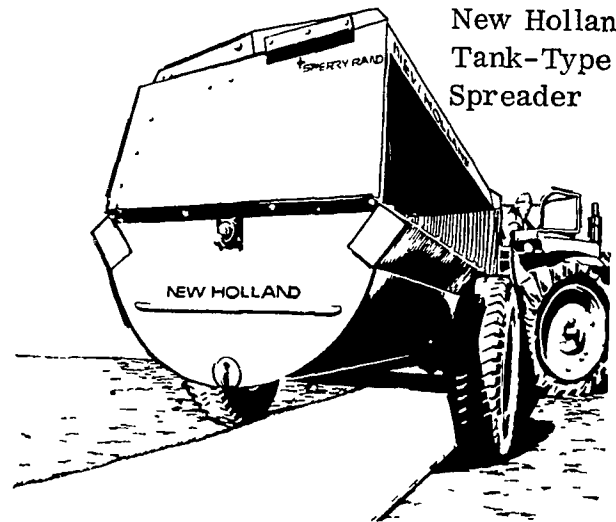
Don't hesitate to apply lime, even if the ground is frozen. The freezing and thawing action of Winter helps disseminate the lime, assuring you a properly balanced soil, ready for Spring plowing. And remember, liming pays in extra bushels and tons of crops and forage.

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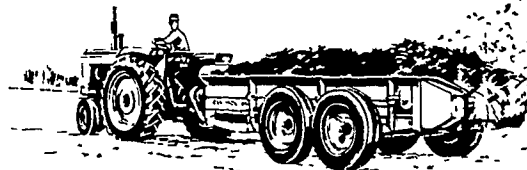
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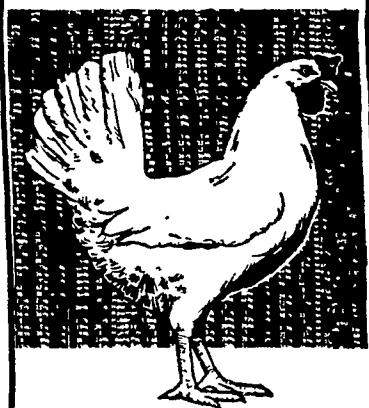


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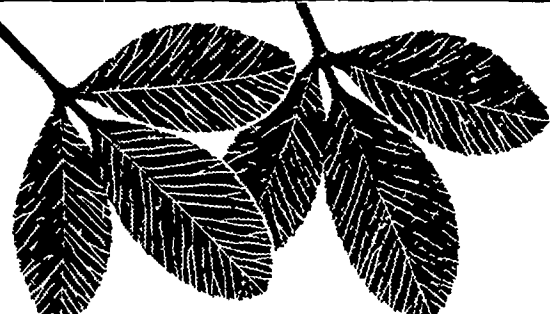
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