

AGRICULTURAL.



PROPER TIME TO CUT GRASS FOR HAY.

The above is a question about which good practical farmers entertain quite opposite views; though they seem to agree in this, that the value of hay as food for farm stock depends very much upon the time or season of its growth when mown.

But notwithstanding the apparent agreement, there is still a wide difference of opinion as to the time the grass possesses the most value for winter food for cattle, horses and sheep.

This contrast in thrift of the cattle on adjoining farms, is frequently occasioned by the fact, that one farmer cuts his grass early, or mostly while in blossom, and the other letting his grass crop stand till the seed has generally matured.

Of late years, the attention of farmers has been more directly called to this important subject, through the agency of many of the State and county Agricultural Societies.

"At what stage of growth do you prefer to cut grass to make into English and into swale hay, and what is your reason for your preference?"

In 1856, Mr. Flint, Sec'y of the Mass. Board of Agriculture, issued circulars (containing the above quoted queries) to practical farmers all over the State.

"This practice is unquestionably founded on a correct principle, the object of the farmer being to secure his hay, so as to make it most like grass in its perfect condition.

The Secretary of the Maine Board of Agriculture issued circulars among the farmers of that State propounding a series of questions upon practical matters connected with the farm.

"The principal point to be inquired into in order to decide the best period for cutting is, when does grass contain the most nutriment? And to this, no definite and precise answer can be given, which will be alike correct in all cases, for reason that in different grasses this stage is not the same, being earlier in some than others; but for a general answer, both theory and the opinions derived from the experience of the great majority of intelligent and observing farmers, concur in the reply—'when in full blossom, or while the bloom is falling.'"

to assist in the formation of seed, and a part to constitute woody fibre, which is indigestible and worthless; and so much as is thus converted, is actual loss. Of hay cut at a later stage, cattle will doubtless eat less, and some infer from this, that it will "spend better;" but the true reason why they eat less is, because the system can digest and assimilate less.

The actual benefit derived from hay is in proportion to the available nutriment contained in it. As far as our observation extends, the prevalent opinion is, that more loss is sustained by late, than by too early cutting. That grass is sometimes mown too early, there is no doubt; but as a general rule, the farmer had better err on the safe side, and commence haying early, if he suffers loss by shrinkage of the first mow.

We have attended many auction sales of hay, and almost without exception, the early cut and well secured hay brought a higher price than that made from the same varieties of grasses, but not cut till the seeds had matured.

We think much might be gained by sowing in different fields, two varieties of grass seeds that mature at about the same time. The southern and western clovers usually ripen before red-top and timothy are sufficiently matured for mowing.

It is our own experience with this variety of clover, when cut in blossom, and mostly made in the cock, we find our cattle to be fond of it, and they eat the entire stalks as clean as they do of the finer grasses.

Of the different methods of curing hay, we may have something to say in a future paper.—L. B. in the Country Gentleman.

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