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Timely Farm Suggestions

By TAIT BUTLER.

Crops to Help Cotton and Not One to Take Its Place are What We Need

A LETTER just received contains the following statements, which are similar in effect to others frequently made: "If we cannot make cotton profitably because of the ravages of the boll weevil, what crop can you suggest to take its place? Corn is not a profitable crop in the South, we are too far south for wheat, oats are more or less uncertain and on the whole no more profitable than corn and peanuts, which you suggested a few years ago, have proved unsatisfactory."

We never have and never expect to suggest one single crop to "take the place of cotton." In the first place, we do not believe there is another farm crop the equal of cotton or that can take its place, all things considered. In the second place, if any one crop were to take the place of cotton we would still suffer from what has been the chief objection to our cotton farming; namely, a one-crop system of farming, which is always a failure and leads to poor soils and poor people sooner or later.

But this is a serious question which our friend raises. It has been raised often, since the coming of the boll weevils, and while it has been answered often, the answer has not been satisfactory to many.

Let us briefly review the statements made in this quotation:

Is corn an unprofitable crop in the South? It most assuredly is, as now grown. The average yield is less than 20 bushels per acre and if one-third to one-half of this crop is taken to pay the rent on the land and the interest and depreciation on the equipment — mules and implements —it needs no expert in farm economics to see that the grower of such a crop does not get sufficient compensation for his labor to enable him to live as an American citizen should live. Indeed, it is apparent that such a crop is not sufficient to enable the producer to live and give the necessary aid to the maintaining of schools, roads and other necessary adjuncts to a desirable rural life.

But there is another side to the question. Is there any need of growing only 20 bushels of corn to the acre? Could we not, with no more expense, grow 40 bushels to the acre, if we used a few simple agricultural facts, which can be learned by anybody, to increase our soil fertility?

The writer believes that corn will soon become a profitable crop in the South when every cornfield also grows a crop of cowpeas, velvet beans or some other legume, and when every field to be planted in corn is sowed in crimson clover the preceding September or October.

The second statement made in our quotation, that "we are too far South for wheat," is also true as regards the Cotton Belt, and we see no means of overcoming this natural or climatic difficulty. But what about the third statement, that "oats are more or less uncertain and on the whole no more profitable than corn?"

Personally, we believe oats as certain a crop as any farm crop, in any section, if sowed early in the fall on land of sufficient fertility to be reasonably certain of producing a fair yield of any crops. That oats are no more profitable than corn is probably true, and it is equally true that our yield of 25 bushels or less of oats per acre is not a profitable crop anywhere. But when every oat crop is followed by a crop of cowpeas, soy beans or peanuts, the same season, and these are plowed under, grazed or harvested and fed to livestock, and the manure returned to the land, and then these crops are followed with a crop of crimson clover to be plowed under for a corn crop, both corn and oats will become profitable and as certain as anything in farming, which depends to the same extent on the weather and other conditions beyond the control of man.

Coming to the last statement in the quotation: have peanuts, which we have often suggested as a splendid crop for the South, proved unsatisfactory? We have no hesitation in stating, with much emphasis, that such is not entirely a correct statement. To those who have grown peanuts for the first time and failed to study the crop and cultivate, harvest and market it as the experience of peanut growers proves must be done, it has proved unsatisfactory. But those who have tried the peanut and given it the treatment which it requires, and which can easily be learned and carried out by any man who will accept the knowledge we already have of the crop, there has been no better crop than peanuts—not even excepting cotton.

No one crop will take the place of cotton, and it is perhaps well for the future of agriculture in the South that such is true. What we want is a system of cropping, or a combination of crops, to take the place of not all the cotton, but at least one-half the land on which cotton is now grown; because half the land now planted to cotton will produce as much as we are now growing. These crops, which our friend rejects, if used in connection with all the legumes possible, will not only take the place of all the cotton land that should be given up by that crop, but such a cropping system will make all these crops profitable, and also cotton, even in the presence of the boll weevils. Such a system of cropping will also mean permanently increased soil fertility, if we spend the money now spent for nitrogen in commercial fertilizers in buying increased quantities of lime, phosphoric acid and potash.

Beet Pulp in a Ration With Cottonseed Meal and Hulls.

A READER writes: "We are feeding dairy cows cottonseed meal and hulls, and wish to add beet pulp; please advise number of pounds for cow."

Add as many pounds as the increase in the flow of milk will make profitable. This is as definite as we can possibly advise without more information as to the amounts of cottonseed meal and hulls fed and the amount of milk the cows are giving. For ordinary cows, three to four pounds of cottonseed meal is as much as should be given daily and when the roughage is cottonseed hulls, probably three pounds a day is as much as should be given as a regular feed to a cow giving 20 pounds of milk a day or less. But at least three or four pounds of cottonseed meal should be given daily before more expensive feeds are used. If, however, a cow receiving four pounds of cottonseed meal a day will give enough more milk to pay a profit on additional feeds, like beet pulp, it should be added as liberally as the increased flow of milk justifies. If a really good dairy cow she may pay for the addition of eight or ten pounds of beet pulp daily; if a medium cow, probably three to five pounds a day is all she will pay for with an increased flow of milk; and if a poor cow, she will almost certainly not pay for any addition of beet pulp to the three or four pounds of cottonseed meal she should receive. In fact, it is doubtful if a poor cow will even pay for that much cottonseed meal, much less any addition of beet pulp.

The Best Cross for Poland-China Gilts

A READER says he has three Poland-China gilts from which he expects to raise pigs to sell on the local market for pork. He wants to know whether he should buy a "pure-bred Poland-China boar, or would an Essex, Duroc-Jersey, or Berkshire boar give him pigs that would grow to a heavier weight in a shorter time?"

If the gilts are grade Poland-Chinas, which we assume is the case, then, in the minds of some people, a boar of some other breed would produce better results in pork production. We do not believe that such is the case. With grade Poland-China gilts we would use a pure-bred Poland China boar. Pigs of more uniform color, type, size and feeding qualities will be obtained, which are all highly desirable qualities in market pigs.

There is, however, no serious objection to the use of a Duroc-Jersey or Berkshire boar, except that the gilts raised from such a cross will be less valuable for breeding, unless they are bred to a boar of the same breed as their sire.

Grain Ration for Heifer Calf.

A READER wishes to know, "What grain to feed a heifer calf two months old, how to start feeding it, and how much?"

The calf is already getting beggarweed hay and four quarts of skimmed milk per day. There is no better grain for such a calf than corn, and it is probably best fed whole. Put a little shelled corn before the calf twice a day, aiming to give only what it will eat up from one feed to the next; but in any case remove such as may be left from the previous feeding and put in fresh corn twice a day. Wheat bran and oats are also excellent feeds for calves and a mixture of equal parts of these and corn is as good a combination as could be wished. But with skimmed milk and beggarweed hay, corn will do very well.

As to the quantity of grain to feed, probably the best plan is to keep grain before the calf for a few days until it begins to eat pretty well and then only so much as it will eat up clean rather promptly, twice a day, should be fed.

One pound of grain a day from two to three months of age, and then gradually increase to two pounds a day and this continued from three to six months, should not be far wrong for a calf receiving milk and hay. Unless it is desired to push the calf for some special reason, two pounds of grain a day should be sufficient for a calf up to six or seven months old.

It may be easier to start the calf eating grain by using ground feed at first, and putting a little in the mouth after the milk has been given, but as a rule, whole grain does equally as well as ground feed.

Balancing a Ration for Dairy Cows.

A READER wants to know if a satisfactory ration for dairy cows can be made of the following feeds: "Cane (sorghum) hay with a small amount of cowpeas grown and cured together, corn stover and shucks, and wheat straw, as the roughage; and crushed oats, corn and cob meal, wheat bran and cottonseed meal or cottonseed?"

In answering this inquiry and suggesting a ration, we cannot forego the opportunity to insist that for dairy cows, silage and more legume hays would add to the value and cheapness of the ration. Since cowpeas only form a small part of the mixed sorghum and cowpea hay, we have no roughage rich in protein. We suggest, however, that the sorghum and cowpeas, being the best roughage available, be fed as liberally as is possible in view of the amount on hand and the number of cows to be fed. In addition to this we would feed all the corn stover and wheat straw the cows care to eat. Unless a liberal allowance of the mixed sorghum and peavine hay is given, these cows will not be supplied with suitable roughage and at best they cannot give as good results from such rough feeds as they would were silage and legume hays provided.

If cost is not to be considered (the prices of the feeds are not stated in the inquiry), we would recommend feeding equal parts, by weight, of the crushed oats, corn and cob meal, wheat bran and cottonseed meal, and giving about one pound of this mixture for every three pounds of milk produced per day. If cost is an important item, as it usually is and should be, then we would make up the ration with three to four pounds of cottonseed meal a day, according to the production of the cow, and add as much of the cheapest of the other grains as the cow will pay a profit on in increased production of milk. There is not much difference in the feeding value of the other feeds mentioned and the cheapest per pound should probably be used, if the cow will pay for them in increased flow of milk.

Aberdeen-Angus the Correct Name.

A READER wants to know if "Aberdeen-Angus, Polled Angus, Black Angus, and Angus all refer to the same breed of cattle, and if so, which is the correct name?"

These names all refer to the same breed of beef cattle. Angus is simply a shortening of the correct name by dropping the word Aberdeen, while "Black Angus" is entirely wrong, because all Angus cattle are black when true to breed color.

The correct name is probably Aberdeen-Angus, but usage also gives sanction to the use of Polled Angus.

An extra grain of corn on each ear, an extra boll of cotton on each stalk, an extra cent for each dozen eggs, an extra dime for each pound of butter, an extra dollar for each bale of cotton ——little things within themselves but meaning millions to the South each year. "Many a mickle makes a muckle" is as applicable to increased earnings as to the saving of what has been earned.

The hogs that will weigh 100 pounds or more when fattened should be prepared for slaughter, and sent to market as soon as possible. It is not a wise plan to feed them during the winter and run risks of catching diseases for extra growth.—Wm. Hart Harrison.

He who does wrong, does wrong against himself.—Marcus Aurelius.