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Pasture Notes.

BASIC SLAG.

Owing largely to the war, and the changes thereby brought about in the making of steel much of the basic slag now on the market is of reduced fertilising value. In order to enlighten farmers on the subject the British Board of Agriculture is distributing a leaflet. According to this information there are now three distinct types of slag which must on no account be confused:—

1.—Bessemer slag, containing phosphoric acid equivalent to 40 per cent. or more of tricalcic phosphate, largely soluble in 2 per cent. citric acid; usually 80 per cent. of the total is guaranteed soluble.

2.—Basic "open-hearth" slag, containing less phosphoric acid, equivalent to 15 to 31 per cent. of tricalcic phosphate, largely soluble (80 per cent.) in 2 per cent. citric acid, the first pourings being richer than the last.

3.—Basic "open-hearth" slag made by the use of lime and flourspar, containing as much phosphate as the poorer grades of the preceding class, but only slightly soluble (20 per cent. or less) in 2 per cent. citric acid.

The first of these types, the Bessemer slag, is the material which for many years was well known as one of the most effective of fertilisers for pasture land. The second and third types have come into prominence in recent years, and especially during the war, as the result of changes in the method of making steel. At first sight they are not very promising agriculturally, but field experiments have shown that they possess distinct value.

The second class have proved substantially equal in fertiliser value to the old Bessemer slags when compared on equal phosphate content. The third class have proved more effective than was at first assumed from their low solubility in citric acid. Where the growing season has been sufficiently long these slags are approximately as useful as the others, in spite of the low solubility. Where the growing season is shorter or an early start more necessary, the high soluble slags have proved more effective.

SMUT PREVENTION.

At the Wagga experimental farm trials have for some time been made with the prevention of smut by treating the grain with dry copper carbonate instead of bluestone—copper sulphate. The bluestone treatment often means cracked grain, and is apt to delay germination. As the result of their conclusions the authors finally adopted a treatment with dry copper carbonate. The latter, which was in the form of a powder, was dusted through the seed at the rate of two ounces to one bushel of wheat. The grain and the fungicide must be thoroughly mixed, preferably by mechanical means. The results of this treatment show distinct increases in the yields per acre. These increases were substantial, amounting in some cases to practically 100 per cent. They summarise the advantages as follows:—

- 1.—No water is required.
- 2.—No injurious effect is caused to either the grain or the young plant, as in the case with bluestone pickling.
- 3.—Seed wheat can be treated weeks before it is sown.
- 4.—No damage is done to the grain if it should lie in a dry seed-bed for weeks before germinating.
- 5.—A better germination is obtained.
- 6.—The process is quicker and less labourious than wet pickling.
- 7.—A better yield is obtained.
- 8.—The whole of the season's requirements of seed wheat can be treated at the farmer's convenience, and not necessarily within a day or two of sowing.

This process is certainly worth a trial on some of the grain crops which the Agricultural Department have supervision of.

DRY CLEANING WOOL.

It is observed that in the United States a system of cleaning greasy wool by the use of Plaster of Paris or Gypsum, is under test. It is claimed that the process is less costly than the usual wool scouring methods, that it is more effective, that the fleece may be so treated that it remains unbroken, and that the wool, after undergoing the treatment, is in the best condition for the purposes of manufacture. It is probable that this dry cleaning wool process will be demonstrated in Australia very shortly, but there is no indication that New Zealand fallmongers are interesting themselves in the matter.

CARDEN NOTES.

THE KITCHEN GARDEN.

As soon as the ground is fit get in early potatoes. The potato is a sub-tropical plant, and will not stand the slightest touch of frost, but it enjoys a considerable amount of heat, light, air, and moisture. Potatoes are like many other things, such as lettuce. When overcrowded they heat and bolt. The lettuce goes to seed, the potato goes to top, to the sacrifice of the tubers. Therefore there are two important points in potato growing. Avoid overcrowding or planting too large sets, with too many eyes upon them. The distance apart to plant must depend upon the nature of the potato to be planted. The large, main crop kinds require considerably more room than the early and smaller growing kinds. Early kidneys and half rounds should be planted about 2ft to 2ft 6in from row to row, and 1ft in the row; whilst the larger and main crops kinds require 2ft 6in to 3ft apart, and 15in in the row. The depth to plant depends upon the nature of the soil. In a light, loamy soil the sets should be planted 6in to 8in in depth; in a cold, wet, or heavy clay soil 4in is quite sufficient—indeed, if the ground is very low and wet, the sets may be placed upon the surface of the soil. The proper size is, for a round set 1½in to 2in diameter, weight 2oz; for kidneys, length 2½in, weight 1½oz, with two sprouts on the crown only. When large potatoes only are available, cutting must be resorted to. Cut out two eyes on each set with as much flesh attached as possible. The cutting should be done on the day of planting, or at most the day before, as if left much longer the sets get tough from loss of moisture, and consequently a considerable amount of vitality is lost. The next point to be considered is a very important one. If the tops become frosted they get such a check as to stop growth entirely for a time, and when growth does start again it is not a continuation of the leading shoots that were frozen, but side shoots in quantities are produced, thus causing overcrowding and heating at the expense of the crop. It is very important not to be in a hurry in planting in cold, damp, and frosty localities. If the sets are in, a watchful eye must be kept to keep the tops well moulded as they appear, until all danger of frost is past.

Plant sea kale crowns in clumps for forcing. As soon as growth is visible coverings must be placed over them—sea kale pans, tubs, or half-barrels turned bottom up should be placed over each clump. Exclude air and light until the young growth is sufficiently long for use. To force growth pack around and between the covering with warm stable manure. This is a very fine vegetable. When forced in this manner it comes out white and crisp, like well-bleached celery.

As Jerusalem artichokes are now beginning to shoot, it is necessary that they be lifted, the best tubers being picked out and stored, and the smaller and medium sized ones kept for replanting.

Rhubarb.—Where new beds have to be made or old roots reduced, no time should be lost in getting this done, as rhubarb is in some places beginning to grow. Small sowings of Brussels sprouts should be made, also cauliflower and cabbage, on a warm, rich, sunny border.

Sow also spinach, radish, and lettuce on a warm bed.

Sow peas and beans for succession, also stake the autumn-sown ones.

Parsnips should be sown now as soon as possible on the deepest and best ground as regards texture, but it need not be on the richest. If the roots can push down without interruption good parsnips will be secured. Very rich soils have a tendency to cause parsnips to become coarse and very rooty; therefore it is important that the ground for this crop should have been turned up in the autumn, so as to cause it to be sweet, open, and free.

Leeks.—Sow the main crop in very rich soil, and rather thickly, as they will have to be planted out. With a little care and thought this sowing may be carried on for successional planting. When the strongest ones are large enough, lift and plant in trenches, and they will soon produce an early supply. The remainder may be left to grow on in the bed, and replanted later. This plan will supply a long season of fine roots.

Cucumbers.—The frame culture of cucumbers is generally started during this month. Unless a goodly amount of fresh stable manure is procurable, it must not be thought of until well into next month, but where it can be had in quantity a start may be made at once. The most important business is the preparation of the bed, and in this, as in all else, there is a right and a wrong way. The first thing to do is to drive in four stakes at least 18in each way larger than the frame itself. Commence with the outside, first using the long stuff for its construction, and keep

this part a little in advance of the centre until the full height is reached, shaking the material well, and beating it fairly firm with the back of the fork.

POST AND TELEGRAPH.

INCREASED RATES ANNOUNCED.

The Postmaster-General announces that the following alterations of postage and telegraph charges will come into force on August 1st:—

Letters and letter cards, inland, from 1½d for 4oz to 2d for 2oz; Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and certain other countries, from 1½d to 2d.

Postcards from 1d to 1½d. Late fee from 1d to 2d.

Packets (comprising commercial papers, books, and printed papers, pattern and sample packets, and unregistered magazines, inland, from 1d for the first 2oz and ½d for each additional 2oz, to 1½d for each 4oz up to 1lb.

Newspapers, inland, from ½d to 1d. The fee for registration is raised from 2d to 3d.

Inland parcels from 4½d to 6d for the first pound.

The fee for insurance of parcels, inland, is raised from 2d to 3d up to £2. For private letter-boxes the charge is altered from £1 to £1 10s per annum, and for private mailbags £2 to £2 10s per annum.

— Money Order Branch. —

Money Orders.—The new rates are:—By post payable in New Zealand, 1d for each £1 with minimum of 6d. Payable beyond New Zealand (except in Australia, United States of America, or Canada) 6d for each £1. Payable in the United States of America and Canada, 5d for each 2s. By telegraph, payable in New Zealand, the same as by post, plus telegraph fee of 1s 6d if sent by ordinary telegram, or 3s if sent by urgent telegram. Payable in the United Kingdom, the same as by post, plus cabling fee. Domestic orders, 9d each, including delivery fee.

— Postal Notes. —

The new commission rates are:—Up to 2s 6d, 1d; 3s to 15s, 2d; 20s, 3d.

— Telegraph Charges. —

Inland ordinary telegrams:—Week days, 1s for the first twelve words, and 1d for each additional word. Urgent telegrams double these rates. Sundays and public holidays the rates for week days.

Registration of code addresses, an increase from 10s to £1 per annum.

TELEPHONE CHARGES.

The scale of charges for toll communications is raised as follows:—Up to twenty miles, 8d for the first three minutes and 2d for each additional minute or fraction thereof; up to fifty miles, 9d and 3d; 75 miles, 1s and 4d; 100 miles, 1s 6d and 6d; 150 miles, 2s 3d and 9d; 200 miles, 3s and 1s; 250 miles, 3s 9d and 1s 3d; 300 miles, 4s 6d and 1s 6d; 350 miles, 5s 3d and 1s 9d; 400 miles, 6s and 2s; 450 miles, 6s 9d and 2s 3d; 500 miles, 7s 6d and 2s 6d.

For communications from subscribers speaking from their own telephones, half these rates up to ten miles only.

Night toll communications at half rates will be available from 10 p.m. instead of 8 p.m.

WAR TROPHIES.

In addition to asking the loyal co-operation of all soldiers for transport publications for the public library, we are anxious to receive on behalf of the Southland War Museum a collection of trophies. It is very important that nothing be lost that will be in any way a war trophy. Southland soldiers have played an important part in the war and we must preserve, for the benefit of those who follow, something of a tangible character.

Every part of the Dominion is seeking a collection of trophies and we must not be behind. Numbers of articles which have been brought from the battle front are being lost sight of, and we would be glad to receive anything at all. Name and address must be sent, also full particulars of article, where found, stunt, etc. Articles can also be displayed in the museum and remain the property of the sender, but can we, as representing Southland soldiers, make a direct gift to the people. Trophies can be sent to "The Digger" office direct, box 310, Invercargill; or to Mr Crosby Smith, Athenaeum Buildings, Dee street, Invercargill.

The current harvest of sugar in Natal and Zululand is expected to produce from 175,000 to 180,000 tons, leaving from 30,000 to 40,000 tons for export. The yield exceeds the previous highest record by 25,000 tons.

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