

with other forage crops that compete with it in popular usage. One is more likely to undervalue than to overvalue the reliability of lucerne during crucial seasons.

The relative values of a lucerne crop which may be relied upon for forage during unfavourable seasons and of other crops which may not be so relied upon cannot be ascertained merely by comparing the crops in respect to the annual yield of nutritive matter. Hence, even if it were true to say that an acre of, say, grass, would under certain circumstances produce annually as much nutritive matter as an acre of lucerne, it would not follow necessarily that the products of the grass and of the lucerne were of equal cash value. The reliability of the lucerne during critical seasons would almost always swing the balance in its favour.

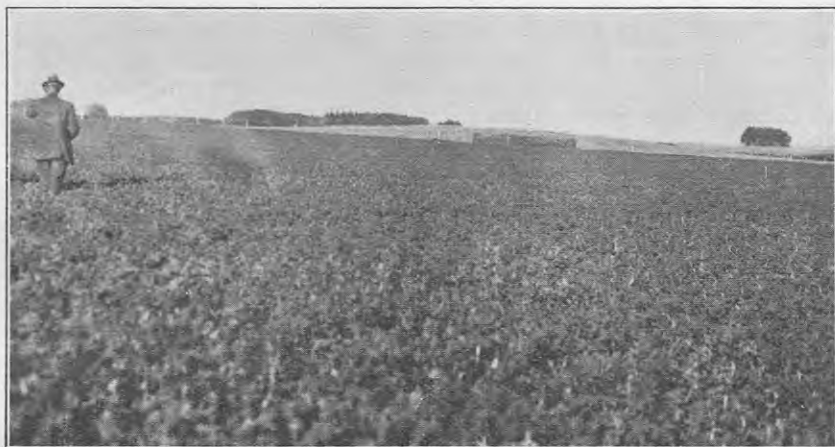


FIG. 1. TYPICAL LUCERNE STAND IN SOUTH TARANAKI.

*Low Cost of Production.*—Forage from lucerne is ordinarily characterized by low cost of production. Low cost arises as the combined effect of three factors—the heavy yield of the crop, its reasonably low cost of establishment, and its relatively long life as a producing unit.

The matter of yield has already been discussed. For some obscure reason it is frequently assumed that it is a very costly matter to establish a crop of lucerne. In view of all the facts it is difficult to know why this idea is held. Under ordinary circumstances, apart from the cost of lime, it should be no more expensive to establish an acre of lucerne than to sow down the same land in permanent pasture. The preparatory cultivation and manuring needed for the one would serve equally well for the other. The only difference would be in respect to cost of seed, and 15 or 16 lb. of lucerne seed is not substantially different in cost from the pasture seeds for an acre.

Normally lucerne lasts as a profitable crop for many years—in fact, at times it becomes practically permanent. But should its life be limited to five or six years, as sometimes happens, it will even then usually have proved a handsomely profitable proposition. This is because