

To secure a good aftermath and less damage to the pasture the cutting should begin as soon as climatic conditions usually allow of fairly good harvesting conditions. Fields harvested for hay should receive an extra allowance of fertiliser and lime to stimulate the white clover so that the sward will recover. The topdressing should be given either just before closing the field, or, probably better still, immediately after cutting.

Fertilisers which improve the growth of clover are of the greatest value. Therefore, on soils which respond to them, lime, phosphate, and potash should be employed to reinvigorate the sward.

Importance of Clover

Good pasture hay is made from a balanced mixture of palatable grasses and clovers. The more fibrous a clover or a grass, the less valuable is it as a constituent of hay. It is generally recognised, therefore, that ryegrass makes better hay than Yorkshire fog, and it is probable that white clover is of better feeding value than the more fibrous clovers, such as red clover and lucerne.

Being a winter fodder, hay should have a high protein content. As clovers contain more protein than grasses, they are important constituents in the hay, and should be well represented. Pure clover hays, such as lucerne and red clover, are valued because of the high protein content of the leaves. By far most of the hay made in New Zealand is from permanent leas.

Time to Cut

The feeding value of hay depends largely on the stage of growth when mown. Cut in the flowering stage, with the stamens of the flowers protruding, grasses produce the greatest amount of feeding value per acre. Cut later in the seeding stage, heavier yields are obtained, but the material is by then so fibrous that the feeding value is very low per ton, and the total feeding value per acre is lower than when cut in the flowering stage.

Cut earlier than in the flowering stage, the yield and feeding value per acre is lower than in the flowering stage, but the feeding value per ton of fodder is higher. Except for second cut hay, cutting at this stage is seldom

possible. Nevertheless, taking into consideration the effect on the pasture sward, the better aftermath secured, and the better quality of the hay, it appears that cutting should take place as early as weather conditions will permit, providing there is sufficient bulk to handle efficiently.

The aim should be to cut hay before, rather than after, the flowering stage of the chief grass present, which is usually ryegrass. If ryegrass reaches this stage in late November, then the attempt should be made to cut hay in late November. Clovers do not deteriorate after flowering nearly so rapidly as grasses, and unless they form the bulk in the hay crop their stage of growth is not given much consideration when determining the time to cut. A clover crop is best cut when the clover is in full bloom. At that stage a high quality high-yielding fodder can be secured.

Hay which is dried and cured so that nearly all the natural condition colour of the grasses and clovers is maintained is of good feeding value, is high in nutriment, reasonably low in fibre, and exceedingly palatable. A



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