

Pasture Improvement by Crop Rotation On

West Coast Farms



Fig. 1.—This half of the paddock was ploughed once after clearing and then sown down to grass. Fig. 2.—The other half of the same paddock, which was ploughed twice before sowing down, the first ploughing being for turnips.



Pressing Need for Introduction Of Ordered Routine

A. D. MERCER, Fields Instructor, Greymouth.

ONE of the most pressing needs on West Coast (South Island) farms today is the introduction of some system into farming practice. The haphazard methods of the past are proving inadequate to present-day conditions, and the successful farmer is the one who works year by year to a definite, ordered routine.

In older countries a system of crop rotations has been evolved, varying from district to district according to local requirements and conditions of soil and climate. These rotations are the result of centuries of experience, and any departure from them is not lightly undertaken.

The general attitude is well expressed by A. G. Street in "Farmers' Glory," referring to the Wiltshire four-course:—"This rotation was as unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. One always knew what crop a particular field would be growing two or three years ahead, and worked to that end. Any slight variation was considered a sin, and like sin,

Crop rotation as a means of pasture improvement on West Coast (South Island) farms is discussed by the author, who considers that there is a pressing need in that area for the introduction of an ordered routine into farming practice. A suggested scheme is described, although it is emphasised that the plan must be modified to meet individual requirements and conditions.

it always left its mark. For instance, if one were tempted to harvest for seed a piece of vetches or clover, the extra robbing of the ground showed in the ensuing wheat crop. It mattered not a whit that the produce of this immoral seeding might bring in more money than a good crop of wheat. One didn't farm for cash profits, but did one's duty by the land."

To advocate neglect of cash considerations to West Coast farmers would be, of course, quite impracticable, but there should be a more general realisation of the eventual monetary benefit to be derived from farming in accordance with the principles of good husbandry.

Advantages of Rotation

The advantages of a definite rotation may be stated as follows:—

(1) **Healthier and more vigorous crops.** Repeated growing of one crop leads to loss of vigour and insect and fungous disease.

(2) **Distribution of labour over the year in cultivating and sowing.**

(3) **Economy of soil fertility.** Different crops make varying demands on the essential plant foods. Some plants are deep rooted; others are shallow and draw their requirements from different depths of soil.

(4) **Leguminous crops, such as clovers, tares, and lupins, restore fertil-**