

Farm Practice and Management

Contributed by Officers of the Fields Division

Augmenting the Early Spring Feed Supply For the Dairy Herd

THE most critical period in the care of the dairy herd and in the maintenance of an adequate feed supply is early spring, when supplies of hay, roots, or silage are at a low ebb—at times amounting to an acute shortage—resulting in a loss of production which is never reclaimed. The increased production during the past spring and summer due to Nature's bountiful supply of pasture feed has forcibly drawn attention to the necessity of adequate feed in the early spring.

There are many methods of augmenting the August-September feed requirements, such as the sowing of oats with an autumn-sown pasture, when Nature does not usually respond as last spring.

Mr. F. M. Donovan and Mr. K. M. Martin, Central Road, Ngongotaha, are two farmers of this district who have made the sowing of oats with an autumn-sown pasture a farming practice for augmenting the dairy herd spring feed supply. Hay, roots, and silage form the main winter-early



Mr. F. M. Donovan's dairy herd grazing on young pasture and oats—autumn-sown.

spring stock foods. After the swede crop is fed off a catch crop is grown to be utilised for early autumn supplementary feed and also as a means of checking weed growth. Sometimes a few pounds of red clover and Italian ryegrass are sown with the swedes to serve this purpose.

The autumn-sown pasture is put down in the first or second week of April, $1\frac{1}{2}$ bushels of Garton oats per acre being sown with the grass mix-

ture. A good growth of green feed is available, and by rotational grazing this will last right through October. If the sowing is done in March the oats will require some feeding off in July. Garton oat variety is preferred to Algerian's, as its upright growth has less tendency to smother young grasses and clovers than the more spreading and low growth of the Algerians. Five to six acres is the average sowing for herds of 30 to 35 cows.

The butterfat production on both farms has been consistently good over a number of years, Mr. Martin's herd averaging 360 lb. of butterfat per cow and Mr. Donovan's herd 331 lb.

Both Mr. Martin and Mr. Donovan strongly advocate rugging the dairy herd during the spring. This, together with attention to adequate feeding at this critical period, are important factors in securing consistent and satisfactory returns.

—C. S. DALGLIESH, *Fields Instructor, Rotorua.*

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