

usually more than offset by the gain from the improved quality of the material.

For topdressing, annual applications of lime will give excellent results in most districts, and will go a long way towards enabling the lucerne to combat the invasion of weeds successfully.

Cultivation promotes growth, but because of damage to plants, it is advisable only when the competition from weeds is threatening the life of the stand. Even then, it should be carried out only during a dry spell, and the cultivator should be fitted with narrow lucerne steels.

Grazing

Lucerne should not be grazed in its first year, and later grazing should be light. The stand may profitably be grazed in spring to clear up old growth, and in the autumn when, on entering the dormant period, sufficient growth has not been made to allow another cut to be taken.

As cattle are susceptible to "bloat" when grazing lucerne, they must not be turned on the crop while it is wet, and careful initial regulation of the grazing is essential if losses from this cause are to be eliminated. For a start, the stock must not be left in the paddock for more than a quarter to half an hour, but after a time they will become accustomed to the new type of feed, and it will be found that they can be left on for an hour or longer without suffering any ill effects. Most dairy farmers, however, have a few cows that are particularly subject to bloat, and these should either be kept off lucerne altogether or watched most carefully. Sheep and horses are close feeders, and should not be permitted to graze lucerne hard.

If the stand has been invaded by useful grasses it may be found that the greatest value can be obtained by utilising the area primarily for grazing purposes. Where this is the case, it will be found that the danger from bloat is very much reduced because of the mixed nature of the herbage.

In some cases, stands of lucerne have given good results for thirty years, but if an area lasts for only a third of that time the farmer is well repaid for the work entailed in the laying down and subsequent care of this most valuable crop.



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