

Early Spring Harrowing of Pastures

FIELDS on which cows have been fed hay, silage, and other supplementary fodders become trampled and well coated with droppings by the end of winter. Before the grass commences to grow in the spring these fields should be well harrowed to spread the droppings and distribute the rubbish usually resulting from feeding hay and silage. If the field is to be shut up subsequently for a crop of hay and silage, a good look-out should be kept for pieces of baling wire or other material liable to cause trouble when the field is mown.

If much hay of poor quality has been fed, the older droppings will prove particularly difficult to break up, and ordinary tine harrows or tripod harrows may not prove severe enough

even when weighted. There have been special harrows on the market for many years for this purpose. If the droppings are not broken up properly and spread, the pasture they cover will be smothered and that adjacent to the droppings, being disliked by stock, will not be eaten. Thus not only is latent fertility in the droppings wasted through their not being spread to the benefit of the whole pasture, but each undistributed dropping results in a small area of ground going temporarily out of production.

In the spring it is quite common to see the waste that occurs in fields on which much hay has been fed to cattle in winter. Dotted here and there are oases of taller dark green growth surrounded by lighter green short pasture. If the droppings are properly spread the oases may still be seen, but the difference in growth and colour is not so great and there is less smothering and fouling of the sward where the droppings previously lay.

In the spring the droppings do not cause so much trouble because, being more liquid, they dissolve much more quickly, their place being soon taken by pasture plants. Hence the need to

harrow is not so great then as it is at this time of the year, particularly on pastures on which stock have been concentrated through the winter months.

Spring Topdressing

NOW that increased fertiliser supplies are being made available to dairy farmers for topdressing purposes attention will need to be given to the best use that may be made of them.

On lime-deficient soils, whether straight superphosphate or serpentine superphosphate is used, it should be sown only on fields which previously have received ample supplies of lime.

The farmer should not be afraid to sow his fertiliser soon after it arrives. Supplies available in the spring can be used first to topdress autumn-sown pastures and secondly fields shut up for hay and silage. Next he should pay attention to those fields which have deteriorated to the greatest extent through lack of fertiliser, provided that clover is still present in the sward and the pasture has not reached the state when resowing is advisable.

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