

Poaching of Land on Hauraki Plains



AT the present time, and for the next two months, the low-lying marine silts of the Hauraki Plains present a serious problem through their tendency to poach badly. This condition is brought about by certain factors. First, the natural drainage of this soil is not sufficient to permit of all winter rain to pass through it; second, the provision for removal of surplus water by surface drains is not always satisfactory; and third, the high summer carrying capacity of this land often means that it is called upon to bear heavy winter stocking when it is really too wet to stand up to such treatment. The result, then, is that the land cuts up very badly; much of the better pasture species is tramped out; rushes, pennyroyal, buttercup, and inferior grasses establish; and a condition of progressive deterioration sets in.

By

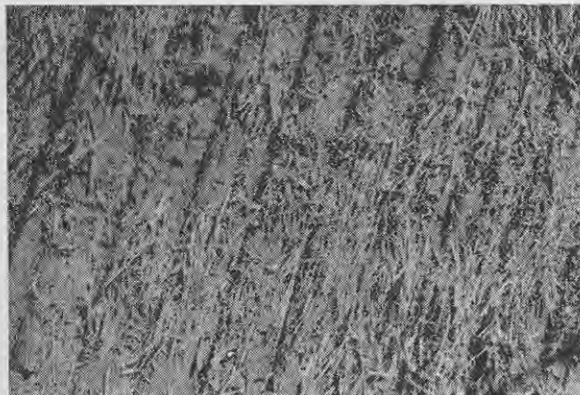
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POACHING has always presented a serious problem to farmers on this land; in fact, it has even been the cause of many farmers failing in their ventures on this country. Remedies of varying types have been tried with just as varying degrees of success. Land has been disc'd down in the late spring and resown; it has been heavily harrowed and left; and in other instances it has just been left in the rough state. None of these measures is fully satisfactory. Late spring is too late to expect any material success with resowing.

An alternative method of treatment, which involves rolling the land while it is wet and soft, has been tried in recent years, with marked success in most instances. For this purpose a tractor fitted with wheel extensions is used to draw a Cambridge roller or a special concrete roller. Experience has shown that exceptional weight is quite unnecessary, and is often very detrimental in such a roller. As the object is merely to roll the land down to a smooth surface where the pasture re-unites, one should use a roller that is just sufficiently heavy to do this work. Very heavy rollers break through the turf, and often bury much of the grass, thus defeating the main purpose for which the roller is used.

This work should be carried out while the ground is soft, and as soon after the field has been grazed as one can get on it. Land dries out quite rapidly through the more even spread of surface water, but it should not be

Left—Stock on badly-poached country are short of feed, poor in condition, and often covered in mud. Very wet conditions lead to high losses from deaths and disease. Right—General view of broken surface caused by poaching. Land becomes unproductive with creeping bent, pennyroyal, buttercup, and rushes predominating.



Badly-poached country after it has been rolled with a Cambridge roller. Note how surface water has been eliminated and the soil rolled together. This work must be done while the land is very soft.



The same area as shown above three weeks later. Photographs are of an identical piece of turf. Recovery after rolling is very rapid, especially where shallow surface drains are provided.