

## VALUE OF SPECIAL-PURPOSE PASTURES



Stock on Mr. Rands's farm are provided with good shelter and shade. [Green and Hahn Ltd. photo.]

(2lb.), and white clover (1lb.). The cocksfoot and subterranean clover dominated the pasture, with the result that lucerne failed to establish. However, the pasture is still a very useful one.

One paddock is being fallowed preparatory to its being sown down to cocksfoot and lucerne pasture next autumn. The whole of this light, stony area will then be in cocksfoot in association with lucerne in some paddocks and subterranean clover in others. Growth in all these pastures is strong and vigorous, giving high production and maintaining growth in dry periods.

### Special-purpose Pastures

On the better land above the terrace some paddocks have been sown in short-rotation ryegrass and white clover, some in perennial ryegrass and white clover, and others in a mixture of perennial ryegrass-Montgomery red clover and white clover. Each of these pastures, together with those on the lower area, provides good grazing during various periods and all combine to maintain production at a high level throughout the greater part of the year.

Every care has been taken in the laying down of pastures. Thorough preparation of the seed-bed after a summer fallow, the sowing of Certified Pedigree seed, and subsequent controlled grazing have, in all cases, ensured good establishment.

The short-rotation ryegrass-white clover pastures sown at the end of January produce well from April to September. During October, November, and early December the perennial ryegrass-white clover pastures are at their best. The Montgomery red clover

paddocks, together with the cocksfoot-lucerne pastures, carry the stock well through the critical period from mid-December to March. In addition to these pastures, which produce well in succession, the cocksfoot-subterranean clover areas, if nursed through the autumn, provide good out-of-season grazing during winter.

**The establishment of these special-purpose pastures has been the key to success. Carrying capacity has been more than doubled and everywhere there is evidence of increased fertility.**

All paddocks have produced well; an area of short-rotation ryegrass and white clover can be given as an instance. This area was sown after an 18-acre paddock of Montgomery red clover was ruined by porina. The rubbish was ploughed in and in February, 1946, the area was sown down with one bushel of short-rotation ryegrass and 3lb. of white clover. The pasture carried 600 ewes for 8 weeks during the following June and July. It was fed off in 3-acre breaks and recovered so quickly that it was fed off three times. After a short spell the paddock was again grazed before it was closed for a seed crop and produced 40 bushels of machine-dressed seed per acre.

The white clover has taken possession in the pasture, now in its third year, and the short-rotation ryegrass has almost disappeared.

It has been the practice to close an area of Montgomery red clover each year in October for use as required. If the weather has been dry, the area has been used to wean lambs on to; if ample other feed has been available for the lambs, it has been saved for seed. Montgomery red clover, which

is preferred to broad red clover because it is more persistent under grazing, is sown with perennial ryegrass and white clover, and, being later in making growth, it takes up the running when the ryegrass and white clover have dried off.

### Loss of Crops

Though in the main all has gone well for Mr. Rands, he has had setbacks. He lost two good crops of peas—one with hail and one with drought. On another occasion the greater part of 33 acres of barley was blown away. Grass-grub and porina have periodically taken their toll of pastures after small-seed crops have been harvested; then again, crops of perennial ryegrass have been affected by blind seed disease.

The practice of topping pastures plays an important part in their management and control. Topping checks the tendency of the earlier strains to run to seed and thus encourages the production of palatable leafage. Even with controlled grazing the topping of pastures is often necessary to maintain them at their highest state of production.

Mr. Rands appreciates the value of small paddocks and has subdivided 9 of his larger ones. Heavy stocking for short periods is possible on these smaller areas. This facilitates effective control of pastures and enables surplus feed to be utilised to advantage. Whenever necessary, pastures are grazed in breaks.

The ever-present possibility of grass-grub or porina attack is a serious concern of farmers, especially of those on light land. As a result of the ravages of grass-grub or porina, the whole feed position can be changed and the whole economy of the farm upset.