



Use of Electric Fence in Feeding off Saved Pasture

By J. M. HOPKINS, Instructor in Agriculture,
Department of Agriculture, Levin.

BREAK feeding of pasture growth to dairy cows by means of the electric fence is usually practised by farmers who are milking for whole-milk supply all the year round and who have to make special provision for autumn, winter, and early-spring feed. The production of winter milk, especially where reliance is placed entirely on grass and grass products such as silage, makes it essential to use the electric fence as a means of rationing off pasture growth. The method does not call for additional labour nor is the expenditure involved unjustified.

IN obtaining the maximum return from any saved pasture growth it is necessary to break fence such feed into areas small enough for all growth to be cleaned up quickly, with a minimum of fouling by the stock. A similar procedure applies to crops which are to be break fed to stock, often by means of the electric fence—only sufficient area should be allowed for a quick and full clean-up of the break. With daily breaking of saved pasture growth fouling does not occur to any extent, as only sufficient area of grazing is allowed for the number of dairy stock to be fed.

Levin Farmer's System

A Levin farmer, Mr. W. S. Long, has adopted a method of break feeding of

saved pasture growth which could be used on any dairy farm where saved grass is fed to milking dairy stock. On Mr. Long's farm no cropping is done and reliance is placed entirely on pasture growth and silage for autumn, winter, and early-spring feeding to the milking dairy herd. The aim is to have a high level of feeding right through the year, with emphasis on the production of winter milk. On the 99-acre farm between 50 and 60 cows are milked during the winter and from 150 to 180 gallons of milk per day are produced. During the past 8 seasons between 40 and 50 acres of pasture have been cut each year for silage.

Normally rationing of pasture and silage feeding are begun in late March or early April and are carried through

to the end of August. Ordinary rotational grazing is practised from September onward. The particular system of rationing pasture no doubt is exceptional, but because of its general simplicity and ease of application other farmers who are supplying milk for city and town supply in winter should find it valuable.

Saving Summer and Autumn Grass

A very early start is made with the saving of pasture growth on Mr. Long's farm and normally grass saving is begun in late January or early February. In an average season the aim is to have on hand by mid-May up to 50 acres of pasture growth up to 9in. long and to have any areas which have already been fed off again making good growth. Pasture growth is built up by dropping from the normal feeding rotation any fields which can be spared. When growth in these fields is sufficiently long they are fed off daily in breaks made by employing the electric fence and the rest of the farm is spelled. Fed-off fields are cleaned up by dry stock or, if necessary, by topping them with the mower, and are again shut up.

Aluminium Wire Used

Because of its lightness and the ease with which it can be shifted, a single

Heading photograph by W. J. Neville.