

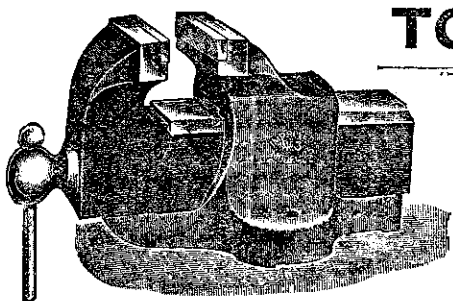
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THE FARM.

(By "Furrow").

THE VALUE OF SPROUTING SEED POTATOES.

Farmers who are on the outlook for more improved methods in potato culture regard the seed sprouting box as one of the biggest factors in increased and profitable potato production. The advantage of sprouted seed is appreciated by most growers, but systematic sprouting is not commonly practised. Ayrshire is regarded as the best potato growing land in the world and there no farmer would plant without first sprouting his seed. Sprouting boxes are regarded as an essential in the farm equipment. Selection of seed and keeping it in boxes until it is sprouted has been responsible in Ayrshire for an increased average production from six to fully ten tons per acre. Sprouting the seed not only means bigger yields but quicker returns. I have made a sprouting box which I consider an improvement on any other I have seen in use. It is 30 x 15 inches and 4½ inches deep in the tray part. The bottom, sides and ends are perforated with ¼ in ventilation holes at intervals of 4 inches. This increases the circulation of air among the tubers when the boxes are stacked one on another and makes far better keeping and more uniform sprouting of the tubers. The ends of the box are 9 inches in height and a round one inch handle runs from end to end at the top for convenience in carrying the boxes which are designed to hold ½ cwt each.

To growers in a large way who will require a large number of boxes, it would be a great convenience not to nail up one of the sides but to bore holes 1-8th of an inch and insert pins so that the side could be dropped and allow easy access to the potatoes.

AUTUMN CATCH CROPS.

The lighter arable soils could be put to much better use if only one had the time for dealing with them. If we take an ordinary wheat stubble, there is no reason why it should not carry a patch of trifolium, rye, rape, winter turnips, or even vetches, all of which crops could be cleared without in any way interfering with the regular rotation.

I do not infer that these catch crops can be sown on all farms or soils, but there are many fields which would carry these. The trifolium may be cut green or made into hay. The rye provides useful feed for ewes with their lambs, and after folding can be allowed to seed, or, if desired, may be cut green for soiling purposes. Broad-cast turnips soon cover the ground with their green foliage, and provide a soluble plant foods from being washed out of the soil, and affords a bit for sheep, which, on being folded over the lighter soils help to consolidate and manure them at one and the same time. Vetches may be cut and fed green, or made into hay, and if sown early can usually be removed in time for swede and turnip sowing. Vetches may be classed as a smothering crop, therefore preventing a mass of weedy growth from becoming established during late autumn and early spring. The present season has afforded little opportunity for the cleaning of stubbles, but if the double furrow or broad-shared plough is got to work, the necessary seed-beds can be quite easily prepared.

THE SHIRE HORSE OF TO-DAY.

It is the immense limbs and massive squarely-built body of the Shire which give him an unassailable position amongst the world's breeds of draught horses. The others may possess many merits, but where a single horse has to be used for moving a heavy weight, such as a loaded railway truck, no other possesses the propelling power of the Shire gelding, whose natural weight approaches a ton. Soundness, says an enthusiastic English writer, is usually put next to size as a point in favour of the Shire horse, and although this point could not be claimed thirty years or so ago, it exists pretty generally now, thanks to the rigorous exclusion of unsound animals from the shows of the English Shire Horse Society. The very small percentage of rejections at recent shows proves this. It is safe to conclude that the modern Shire can claim points for soundness, and this extends from breeding stock to the commercial gelding, the indispensable animal for lorry work, the need for which still keeps Shire horse breeding alive. To be able to walk off at a smart pace with a load behind, or trot if need be, is necessary in a draught horse, either on the farm or in the street, and this the improved Shire can do. Activity places a horse high up in the estimation of present-day judges. Another point in favour of the breed is the readiness with which they take to the collar and become tractable, so that even a boy can manage them.

The Poultry-Yard

(By S.Q.M.).

PURCHASING STOCK.

An axiom the acceptance of which should be apparent to all poultry breeders, is that "the best is the cheapest in the long run." Presuming that the reader is prepared to lay out a respectable sum for the purchase of breeding stock, it may be said that he should not consider where he can get the cheapest stock, but he must consider where he can get good stock, and if his purse allows him, where he can obtain the best. Most especially in regard to male birds does this apply, for an inferior male bird is, as a breeder, dear at any price. The cockerel or cock is at least half the pen, and so have him as near perfection as possible.

When buying a pen of breeding birds it is far better, instead of buying them here and there, to obtain them all from the one man, and he an experienced breeder. By purchasing from a breeder of experience one may generally rely on securing birds which are not the good chance progeny of inferior stock, but birds whose parents and grand-parents were birds of the right stamp. A male bird with any serious defect, such as in the heavier breeds, a single-sprig or feathered legs, should be passed by, and if you have one in your possession, see that he passes out. Sometimes Black Orpington cockerels, with a little white in earlobe, may be noticed. Although the writer has not tried the experiment, he is of the opinion that such a cockerel if mated to females with really red earlobes should, in view of the fact that a red earlobe is dominant over the white, produce progeny the majority of which would have red earlobes.

It is not advisable to cross two distinct strains, as sometimes they might not "nick." It is better to mate together birds of the same strain, but see that they are not too closely related. By buying from the one breeder you can obtain birds of the same blood, but not too closely related. A little in-breeding is a good plan for those who fully understand it, but others would do well not to dabble in it. If you have not a very good knowledge of the breed in which you desire to invest, your best line of procedure is to leave the mating in the hands of the vendor, providing, of course, he is a competent and reliable man.

To get in early is a very desirable point in buying stock, for should you leave your purchasing until late, you have but little chance of securing the best on the sale list.

CONSTITUTION.

A bird is worthless as a breeder if signs indicative of constitution are not present. The male to breed from is one fairly bubbling over with constitution, and which is the son of a great laying female. Thus to his progeny will be transmit the laying qualities of his dam, together with his own constitution. Indications of constitution are, bright, prominent, full eyes, clean face, good breadth of back, general activity, and tightness of feathering. The hen or pullet with the constitution is the one to maintain her output of eggs throughout the year. Such are the conditions of poultry-keeping to-day, that only those who fully understand their business and who allow no unprofitable birds on their plants can make a respectable profit out of the feathered tribe. There are men in New Zealand clearing £1000 per annum from fowls, but their success, no doubt, is due to several years experience, combined with aptitude for the work. It is nothing short of sheer madness for the novice to erect many large houses, buy a large amount of stock, and fondly imagine that soon an annual income of about £1000 will be his own. The fact that he will be keeping many unprofitable fowls—birds which rob him of the profit he would otherwise obtain from the payable ones—together with his ignorance of the correct methods of feeding and of checking disease, and, in short, his inability to overcome the many difficulties that poultry-keeping presents to the novice, would for him, spell ruin.

The correct way is to start with a few fowls as a side line to some other business, gradually increasing the flock and gaining experience until the owner is capable of going right in to poultry farming as a business on its own. Touching the profits to be made from poultry it is our opinion that about 10s a year is about the profit a small pullet should show on her first year. Cost of rearing, etc., have been taken into consideration, and in this case we presume the pullet to be sold at the end of her first laying season. If, however, you do not cull, you cannot expect to realise the profit mentioned. A thoroughly competent man with good laying stock should make a deal more than 10s a bird—it is believed that a man in Auckland makes £1 per bird, but he is a very keen and capable man.

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