

* The Farm. *

Starting Potatoes in the House.

Two years ago as preparations were being made for early garden vegetables I concluded to plant some early potatoes. As it was then early in March I was laughed at. But if cucumbers could be started in tin pans and tomato plants grown in boxes, while the temperature occasionally ran down to zero, I did not see why potatoes might not be started ahead of time. As I felt sure they could not be transplanted easily, I looked around for something suitable to plant them in. I decided finally on strong pasteboard boxes. Filling these with rich mellow earth, I set them in a shallow wooden box, selected a variety of potatoes (the earliest we had on hand), cut them and planted three small pieces in each box, put the boxes in a warm place near the stove, and waited.

I kept the ground moist, and in due time my potatoes were peeping through the ground. I moved them to a cool but sunny shelf by the window. On warm days I had them taken outside, bringing them in at night. Thus I kept them from growing pale and spindling, and also got them accustomed to the sun and wind. By the time the frost was out of the ground, so potatoes could be planted, my small field was beginning to show buds. The stalks were sturdy, dark colored and vigorous. In transplanting, the boxes were set into holes ready, with fertilizer at the bottom. The pasteboard was slit down at each corner, and the earth was filled in around the roots without disturbing them in the least. Some cold nights came when my potato crop had to be covered. It is needless to state that the earliest potatoes eaten here that spring were from my window garden potato patch.—(L. M. Clark, in American Agriculturist.

Practical Balanced Rations.

Dr. Wilson in the issue for December 7, gives some practical facts and figures in regard to balanced feeds for farm animals, varied, of course, according to the purpose for which the animals are being fed. I consider the article of great value, but much of it will be lost because of the fact that the majority of common farmers prefer to pay little attention to these so-called scientific mixtures. If the ordinary, uneducated farmer could be made to understand the technical terms used in the directions for such rations he would be a long stride nearer to applying them. A knowledge of the muscle forming or fat forming elements of foods is usually with the ordinary farmer derived from experience. We know what is said of the man who persists in learning in the school of experience. This saying, although having the sanction of age, will not stand the test of truth, unless the meaning of the word "fool" is very elastic. I do not know how much the farmers might profit if they would only study to obtain practical information like that imparted by Dr. Wilson. They would certainly save much that is paid for tuition in this school.

Most farmers know that corn is a fat former and heat producer; also that oats produce muscle and energy; but in what proportion shall they be mixed to get best results for the various purposes? A neighbour found that by mixing bran with corn meal for hog feed made the animals grow bone; but did he stop to think that the bran was a saver of the corn by balancing the ration? Thus we see the central idea in studying to obtain a balanced ration—to economize food and make healthy animals. Those who are studying to produce meat and other animal products cheaply, would do well to look into the matter of balanced rations. The farmer cannot control prices, therefore his study should be to diminish cost of production.

Perhaps many do not know that the object directly aimed at in compounding commercial stock foods and condition powders is the balancing of the ration. Condition powders are correctly named, as they are intended to put an animal in condition, but this effect is not accomplished so much by their medicinal virtues as by the filler they contain. The tonics, alter-

atives, etc., which they contain help to correct the bad effects of previous ill balanced rations, and the filler serves to balance the ration, so the animal begins to improve. The stock foods also work in about the same way. We often hear a farmer say his horses became "run down," the coat looked bad, flesh thin, eyes settled back, appetite poor, etc. He got some stock food and it straightened the animal right out. He may have had a healthful variety in his own possession and did not know how to feed it. We would not often need to balance the ration commercially if we would study the animals and satisfy their cravings. These would usually form a correct formula for a balanced ration, just as our own appetites tell us unmistakably of the needs of the system.—(C. M. D.

Moderate Farm Stocks of Grain.

The consolidation of local return to "The American Agriculturist" makes it appear that the amount of wheat still remaining on farms in the United States March 1 equals 29 per cent of the crop of 1899, or an aggregate of 164,000,000 bushels, compared with 204,000,000 bushels similarly reported last year; but with that exception is the largest since March 1, 1894. The present available supply of wheat for all purposes, according to the authority named, is 264,000,000 bushels, compared with 269,000,000 bushels in 1899. These totals include the farm stocks first named and commercial stocks in warehouses, etc. This shows that the heavy surplus carried over from the great crop of 1898 has been sufficient to so augment the supply from the smaller crop of 1899, in connection with the diminished export requirement, as to leave us with the present supply for all purposes practically the same as was held a year ago.

Some 39 per cent of last year's great crop still remains on the farm, and this farm reserve is placed at 862,000,000 bushels. This amount so held is larger than in any recent year except 1896 and 1897, but smaller when compared with the March reserves in the years just named. The demand for consumption for corn during the last twelve months has been heavy, the report showing that during this period, for the first time, the distributive demand exceeds two billion bushels per annum, including domestic consumption and exports. The March 7 farm stocks of oats, following the excellent crop of 1899, are the largest ever reported, except in 1896, but the excess over the stocks thus held last year is only about 10 per cent. These farm reserves are estimated at 332,000,000 bushels, or 37 per cent of the crop.

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