2. HAY CROPS

E. CLOVER PROBLEMS

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RED CLOVER AS A GENERAL FARM CROP

A discussion of the problems connected with the culture of as old a crop as red clover presupposes: first, that the crop is one of importance, for if it were not the problems would not be of sufficient interest to warrant a discussion at this time; and second, that the culture of the crop is being attended with certain difficulties or that the crop is not being grown as widely as its general characteristics would seem to warrant.

Red clover is unique in being by far the best dual-purpose rotation crop known today. It is one of the standard hay crops of the northeastern part of the United States, its competitor and companion being timothy. Alone or in combination these two crops yield upwards of ninety percent of all the hay produced in the territory east of the western boundaries of Minnesota, Iowa and Missouri, and north of the southern boundaries of Missouri, Tennessee and North Carolina.

As a hay crop red clover does not, of course, take the high place occupied by alfalfa which is in a class by itself. With the exception of alfalfa, however, red clover has perhaps no successful competitor as a valuable protein-producing hay crop and in addition red clover possesses value as a rotation crop.

Red clover is of special importance in maintaining the productivity of the soil. As a hay crop it might be successfully replaced by various other legumes, especially soybeans, but as a combined hay and soil-improving crop soybeans can not pretend to rival red clover. Red clover has about thirty percent of its organic matter under ground, soybeans only ten percent; if soybeans, or any other annual legume for that matter, are cut for hay and the crop removed, the soil will be poorer in nitrogen than it was before the crop was grown.

Summary of discussion presented as part of the symposium on “The Forage Problem” at the meeting of the Society held in Chicago, Ill., November 12, 1923.