

The importance of Silage for Cattle in South Kanara.

BY S. KRISHNA NAYAK, L. Ag.

(Summary.)

On the West Coast cattle are small, stunted and unfit for road-work. A cow on an average gives less than 2 lb. milk per day and thousands of cattle are purchased from the neighbouring provinces every year.

Of the many causes that lead to the deterioration of cattle, the chief is the want of good fodder for a major portion of the year. Practically from January to July cattle starve. From August to November green grass is available but the irregular rainfall affects its supply. Thus cattle become weak and thin; some of them die at the on-coming of the south-west monsoon and those that survive begin to decline after November.

The only remedies that can be suggested are (1) the growth of fodder crops and (2) preservation and utilization of hill grass which is available in large quantities.

The following paragraphs record the results of three trials made in the latter direction in Moodbidri in South Kanara :

During the second week of November hill grass which was fully mature was cut and put into pits 13' × 13' × 6'. It was spread uniformly in thin layers taking care to press it thoroughly by making two big animals trample on it. For every layer of 9" thickness, powdered common salt was sprinkled uniformly at one handful of salt per bundle of grass (100 lb.) The process of filling in was continued until after the stuff was two feet above ground when it was covered with a layer of dry grass and earth. The top and sides were also plastered over. The pits were opened in January and the contents removed in small quantities and fed to cattle daily. The stuff was very good. It had a brown color and a delightful smell and was quite agreeable to cattle.

* Paper read at the M. A. S. U. Conference in July 1928.

Cost of preparation :—

MR. DHARMASAMARAJAYA'S PLOT.	R.	A.	P.
Digging pit 13' × 13' × 6' 16 men	8	0	0
Cutting grass 24 bundles or 24,000 lbs	10	2	0
Transporting and carting	5	0	0
Filling in . . . 7 men	3	8	0
Hire of animals for trampling	2	0	0
Salt	1	0	0
Covering and plastering	0	6	0
	Rs. 30	0	0

Cost per 100 lb. two annas or per cft. Rs. 0—0—6.

In the Mission Coconut plot the cost per 100 lb. was Rs. 0—3—1 and in Mr. Bijoor's plot Rs. 0—3—4. The average of the three plots came to Rs. 0—2—4 per 100 lb.

Thus out of a pit with 24000 lb. of grass put in, 8 animals could be maintained at 20 lb. per day per animal for over 4 months at a total cost of Rs. 30.

This is a lesson which every South Kanara ryot should lay to heart and by which he could save himself and his cattle from ruin as all over the district immense facilities exist for preparing ensilage.