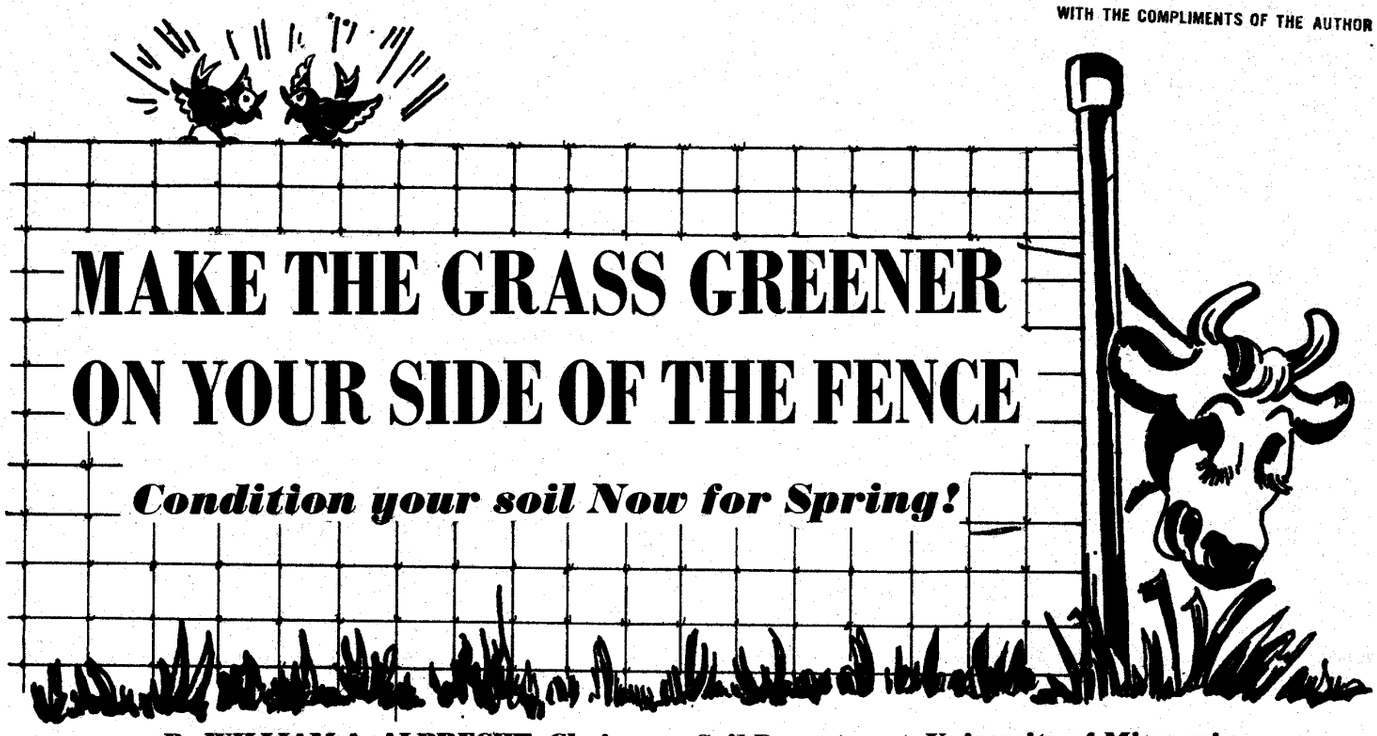


MAKE THE GRASS GREENER ON YOUR SIDE OF THE FENCE

Condition your soil Now for Spring!

By **WILLIAM A. ALBRECHT,** ***Chairman, Soil Department, University of Missouri***

THAT "the grass is greener on the other side of the fence" for the cow is more than bovine fancy. When the cow will risk injury from barbed wire in order to get out on the highway or into another field for the grass on the other side, surely there must be some compelling force responsible.

Perhaps you have never thought that animal instinct and soil fertility are at the basis of what may be wrongly considered as just so much "crazy cow" psychology.

Recent soil studies using animals as means of measuring soil fertility are pointing out that animal choices represent more effective gains by them, better animal health, more regular and prolific reproduction.

Lime treatments on the soil, for example, yield areas commonly selected when cows graze lespedeza in one part of a field in preference to another, as numerous farmers testify. Hogging corn down has confined itself right to the lime marking the limits within which lime was used on the soil. The corn was left untouched where no lime was used even though the hogs passed to and fro through it.

Barley has been grazed out first where 200 pounds of fertilizer were applied in contrast to that with only 100 pounds. Grains, such as corn, in the self-feeder have been selected by hogs according to the soil treatment where the crop was grown. Guinea pigs have selected various grains with differences in choice according to the fertility of the soils.

Rats have selected bagged corn grain and cut into the bags according to the soil treatments, but did not select according to the different corn hybrids involved.

Experimental rats, according to the work of Dr. Curt Richter of Johns Hopkins Hospital, refused to eat fat when they were surgically operated so that they couldn't deliver bile for fat digestion. They refused to eat sugar if their body supply of insulin for consuming sugar was diverted. They ate more sugar, too, according to the dosage of insulin given them to encourage sugar metabolism in the body.

There is then a real physiological basis within the plant to explain possibly why the animal appetite reports different food choices according to differences in the soil.

Yes, "the other side of the fence" is sought by the animal because its better judgment as to its nourishment, and therefore its better health, better growth, and more efficient reproduction are involved. The cows usually break out on to the highway or railroad right-of-way where crops have grown annually but have not been removed.

We have been alarmed about the danger that some valuable meat or milk producer might be killed by traffic. Instead, we should be recognizing the fact that by means of the more fertile soil on the other side of the fence our efforts and the animal's time can be used more effectively in making food.

The fall season has usually been a convenient time for liming plowed soil, particularly where small grains are fall-seeded to be followed by legumes.

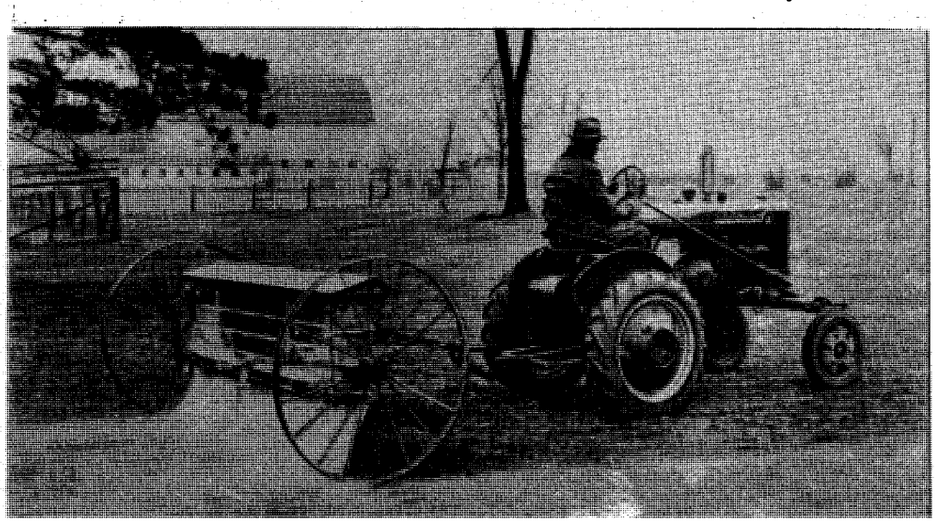
In case you have hesitated about liming now, why not take the efficiency of the animal production business into consideration? Soil treatments are means of increasing the animal's efficiency with no extra labor on your part. Sheep run a better wool-making business if the soil is more fertile. Animals can grow sounder bones and bigger bodies, all during the same time on the same amount of feed. Why not look to the soil fertility improvement by means of the calcium that you can put into the soil to set in motion this improved animal efficiency?

Calcium in limestone, or even in gypsum; phosphorus in the acid, or raw rock forms; potassium as salts; and all the other nutrient elements included on the soil fertility list, need our attention as soil treatments to make the grass greener on our own side of the fence as the cow really sees it.

The cows have been pleading with us, but we have turned them a deaf ear. We may well profit by using these animal assays of our soil fertility as well as by calling on the chemist for soil tests.

Soil nutrients are but 5 per cent in the crop. The remaining 95 per cent are air, water, and sunshine. These plentiful weather-given nutrients will not be fabricated into food for the cow, neither will the crop nor the cow manufacture food for us unless we provide an ample supply of fertility in the soil on which the big business of outdoor chemical synthesis known as agriculture depends.

We can improve the efficiency of our own efforts; we can help ourselves to more and better food when we appreciate the better soil fertility connected with the cow's psychology fully enough to make the grass greener on our side of the fence by improving the fertility of the soil located there.



LIMING IS BENEFICIAL ***because it helps both the plants and the animals to get their needed calcium, even more than because this soil treatment fights soil acidity.***

Reprinted From
The Business of Farming
Vol. 2, No. 6, 1943