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The Sudan grass plots described in the article. This photograph taken on January 28, 1957, shows W.A. Commercial strain on right and S.S.6 (sweet variety) on left.

## CUT OR GRAZE YOUR FODDER CROPS EARLY

### Some Notes on the Nutritional Value of Sudan Grass at the Bramley Research Station

By L. C. SNOOK, D.Sc., Animal Nutrition Officer

**M**OST farmers are aware that fodder crops deteriorate in quality as the plants mature. It is equally well known that, if crops are allowed to run to head, a much greater bulk of material is obtained. The farmer, therefore, has to choose between quality and quantity. As quantity is a much more obvious factor and bulk seems to mean so much in terms of pounds, shillings and pence, there is a tendency to cut or graze crops too late rather than at the best time.

Measurements made on a crop of Sudan grass grown at the Bramley Research Station this summer provide some interesting information and illustrate the importance of early harvesting of forage crops.

The Sudan grass was planted on pasture land which was ploughed on November 5, 1956, and thoroughly cultivated. The seed was sown through a drill (12 lb. per acre) with one bag of Potato Manure B. per acre. By January 2, 1957, the crop was four to five feet tall, at which stage it should have been strip-grazed or cut for hay. Samples were collected for analyses and as shown in the accompanying table the herbage

had a high food value being rich in protein and minerals, and containing comparatively little crude fibre.

The Sudan grass was left until January 30, 1957, before it was cut. As can be seen from the illustration at this stage the crop looked most impressive, being a dense mass of slender canes, eight to ten feet in height and just coming into full flower.

But much of the value of the fodder crop had been lost. The table of analyses shows that the protein content had fallen from 14 per cent. to 6 per cent. in a matter of 28 days. The useless fibre had increased by 10 per cent. while the phosphate level had been halved. What was even more



## TABLE OF ANALYSES

### SUDAN GRASS HAY—BRAMLEY RESEARCH STATION.

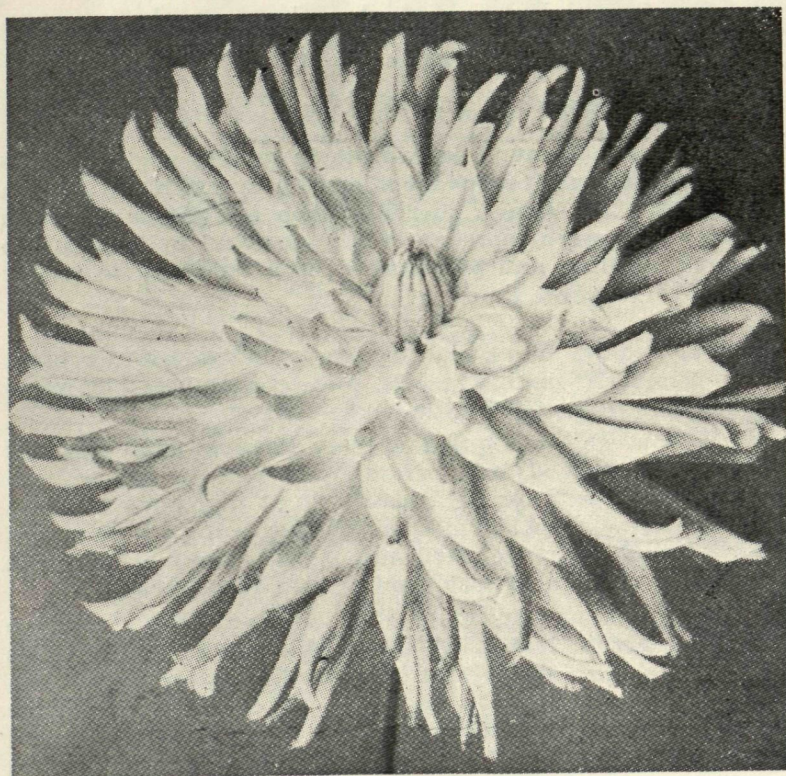
Composition as a Percentage of the  
Dry Matter.

Date of Cutting.	Crude Protein.	Crude Fibre.	Crude Fat.	Carbo- hydrate.	Calcium as Ca.	Phosphorus as P.
2-1-57 (Compound sample) .....	14	25	2	51	0.5	0.22
30-1-57 (W.A. Commercial seed)	6	35	1	53	0.3	0.09
30-1-57 S.S.6 (Sweet variety)	6	34	1	54	0.3	0.10

serious, the crop made very little regrowth after cutting whereas the plants which were cut on January 2, stooled very well despite the absence of rain.

This example illustrates the folly of sacrificing quality for quantity. Even if only one cut is to be expected, a smaller

yield of young material is to be preferred to the greater bulk which is obtained from a more mature crop. This principle is particularly important in a crop such as Sudan grass which has an excellent facility for stooling and regrowing following grazing or cutting.



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