

PART D

LIVESTOCK, PETS AND COMFREY

Chapter 20

Comfrey as Food and Medicine for Livestock

See subsection 'Timing and Frequency of Harvests' in section 'Harvesting Comfrey Leaves' (Chapter 37).

Comfrey Leaves and Livestock Nutrition

"Comfrey is the fastest vegetable protein builder we have found so far, and it is in theory the best cheap source as food for stock to replace concentrates."

-Comfrey: Fodder, Food and Remedy by Lawrence D. Hills. New York: Rizzoli Universe Books: **1976**, page 83.
(Feed Concentrates are mixes of ingredients that have a high amount of cereal grains. Mixes of only grains are also called concentrates.)

"If you want fat cows, you plant rye grass and clover, but you will still get cows with worms and cows with deficiency symptoms. Newman Turner recommends a whole lot of perennial herbs that should be put along hedgerows. We know, for instance, that when cows can just browse along hazel tips and buds, the butterfat content in milk increases, and the cows are healthier. Cows will always eat some Comfrey, though it is not a preferred plant."

-'Introduction to Permaculture: Permaculture Design Course Series, Pamphlets 1 to 14' by Bill Mollison at 'The Rural Education Center', Wilton, New Hampshire, **1981**; published by Yankee Permaculture, Sparr, Florida.
(F. Newman Turner wrote 'Fertility Farming', 'Fertility Pastures', and 'Herdsmanship', all classics of practical organic husbandry.) (A hedgerow is a line of closely planted shrubs and trees, usually bordering a road or field.)

"So you have three strategies, then, with these cattle and deer and goats and sheep.

One is, instead of just relying on annual pastures, have areas of permanent, high-mineral mobilization herbs throughout all your pastures: dandelion, chicory, Comfrey.

Have evergreens, standing, high-nutrition tree crop within forage range that the cattle will coppice.

Have high-sugar summer pods that will carry cattle through the semi-arid seasons. This group is critically important to range capacity. Also, you must have a winter high carbohydrate source: large nuts and acorns."

-'Introduction to Permaculture: Permaculture Design Course Series, Pamphlets 1 to 14' by Bill Mollison at 'The Rural Education Center', Wilton, New Hampshire, **1981**; published by Yankee Permaculture, Sparr, Florida.
(Coppice means to periodically cut back a tree or shrub to ground level to stimulate growth.)

"One can justifiably claim in summary that there is no fodder plant so versatile as Comfrey in its application to the farm need for a farm-grown food supply."

-Comfrey: Nature's Healing Herb & Health Food by Andrew Hughes. Japan: Sanyusha Publishing Co., Ltd, **1992**, page 178.

"Newman Turner in 'Fertility Farming':

'The thing we must do is to get back into our dairy pastures as many herbs as possible to assist the health of the cattle grazing the leys and to benefit the topsoil in a way any amount of chemical dressing can never do.

Hedgerows should contain Comfrey, garlic, raspberry, hazelnut, docks and cleavers, etc.'

-'Benefits of Biodiverse Forage' by Jerry Brunetti, Acres USA: A Voice for Eco-Agriculture, Austin, Texas, Volume 33, No. 10, October **2003**. (Ley farming is growing grass or legumes in rotation with grain or tilled crops as a soil conservation measure.)

"The importance of pasture plant species diversity, creating healing fields on farm:

This can be achieved relatively easily by growing wide ranges of suitable plants on farm and allowing animals free access to them by, for example, incorporating them into pasture or planting them along cattle track fence lines.

I saw this on a number of farms in Australia and New Zealand with Comfrey, flax, alder, elder, willows, chicory, yarrow, burnet, alsike, lucerne, sweet clovers and similar adding both aesthetic appeal as well as wildlife habitat, shelter and shade