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Fodder conditions, Measures for the Winter Months, Water and
Drinking Conditions and Feeding.

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Fodder Conditions, Measures for the Winter Months, Water and
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Although Russia is prominently an agrarian country, the soil conditions are still very varied. The Ukraine is the granary of Russia, at the group of armies, center, there where large sanded areas, steppe-like and therefore uncultivated. In the northern parts swamp, woods and in parts swampy woods were pre-eminent. Large parts of Russia, therefore, remained subsidy areas for concentrated feed as also for the coarse fodder supply, that means concentrated and coarse feed had to be shipped to the troop, if not from home, at least from other districts. The agricultural expert commanded the entire agricultural surface. It was prohibited to the troop to requisition fodder independently.

During the advance hardly any nominative amounts of oats were captured. The troop remained dependent on the supply with regard to oats and grain. For small units it was probably possible to acquire small amounts of oats

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on individual farms and villages far away from the march routes. In the place of coarse fodder green crop was fed, grass, clover, and probably also ~~grain-on-the~~ green corn without any damage. For that it was necessary to equip the units with scythes, which did not belong to the directed equipment. Oats and grain, when it was sometimes missing, could be equalized during the advance with green crop contributions. The time of want only started then, when we were in position warfare in fall or at the beginning of winter.

But now, too, the conditions in the different sectors were varied according to the combat intentions and formation of strong points. Added to that was the difficulty of the supply; it grew with the distance from the home base, with the attacks by partisans, the scarce, rolling railroad stock, the frost damages of the hard winter, etc. Naturally the difficulties were biggest in the first Russian campaign winter 1941/42, because the supply had to be organized first, the width of the gauge had to be re-nailed, at the beginning no fodder was present any where and with the beginning supply by railroad the other needs of the troop and of the position warfare increased by a lot, which had to be satisfied first. It was herewith natural that the supply of horse fodder remained limited at the beginning of the winter 1941/42 generally to oat and fodder preserves. The issued rations additionally had to be kept very small, again and again one had to preserve from the prescribed rations, because the troop rarely knew when it would receive again.

With regard to the supply with coarse fodder the troop was entirely dependent upon itself for the time being. Fodder reconnaissance troops were sent into the woods by the divisions and armored wagon convoys procured hay from the rearward front areas and enemy-free gaps, from distances of up to 80 km, whatever they could lay their hands on. Usually the division veterinary, the regimental and batallion veterinary was the spring and organizer of such hay procurement actions, during which it also did not always come off without bloody engagements with the enemy. It was prohibited to take from the natives hay, which had already been brought in, so that they could feed their horse and their cow through the winter.

In the northern areas already before Christmas 1941 the self-procurement of hay had found its end. Better were the conditions in the agriculturally high-standing, Kurlandic areas. In contrast also after the ~~retreat~~ reverse of the projects before Moscow and because of the unusually severe cold in the central sector immense fodder difficulties appeared. Out of hunger the horses ate the wooden mangers, chewed logs and wooden walls, they even became vicious. Straw roofs had been used up long ago. Hazel bushes and other soft wood bushes were regularly harvested and cut small and then thrown before the horses. Knotted sticks and entire trunks of leaf-bearing trees were offered to them and were devoured over night. Products of the paper manufacture (Cellulose) were softened through boiling and then were fed. Saw dust and wood shavings, even paper and cardboard were taken. Despite all emergency measures: the great dying of the horses could not be stopped. Daily 1,000 horses died of exhaustion on the eastern front, that is they actually starved to death.

Under these circumstances the high stock of horses on the front could not be maintained any more, their stay with the troops could not be justified any more, even if on the basis of repeatedly, most urgent remonstrances by the leading veterinary officers finally coarse fodder was conveyed in a moderate measure by railroad. The coarse-fodder-large-bales frequently

however, were more or less mildued, so that here, too, again losses had to be suffered. That entire fodder bales were thrown away spoiled, was no rarity. For especially unfavorably situated units it could be doubtful even, if the quality of the coarse fodder still profited the use of horse power to fetch it. One was powerless against this spoilage. The railroad did not have available in a sufficient number the ~~trucks~~ ^{tarpaulins}, the administration did not have the towing-roofs, sheds or barns, quite regardless of the fact that the careful pressing of the bales could not be supervised at the fodder trader and producer. The sending back of a large part of the horses into favorable fodder regions was herewith not to be avoided. In question came large and heavy horses, hard to feed and starved out, as far as complete recovery was promised with good fodder conditions. Because of the strain of the rail trip, of the extraordinary extreme cold as well as because of a possible foot march on iced and snowed-in roads one had to desist from leading back completely exhausted horses. They were killed, the meat was utilized for human consumption. With the front troops remained the small, easy to feed and to satisfy, Panye horses.

It was self-evident that the experiences of the first Russian war winter were utilized by all interested offices and that one took measures in time for the following winter. ON all meadows near the front, which were not used as grazings or for the obtaining of green crop, hey was prepared in the coming summer. In the rearward areas the divisions had strong hey details. Where no hey presses could be made available, one built some improvisedly. In time one started with the loading and transporting of coarse fodder to the front, so that, according to human judgment, fodder-poor gaps would be avoided if possible. In time also the quarters were prepared for horses, not needed by the troop. But despite these facts still a number of unfavorable circumstances existed, which also effected disturbingly in the later winters the fodder supply and herewith the maintaining of health of the horses. The capacity of the railroad, bad weather and mud periods, large and difficult approach routes to the troop, bad horse shelters, severe winter, enemy fire of the highway and such.

During the warm seasons it was no problem to feed the horses. For horses which worked green crop was brought in, the other horses were sent out grazing. Under the influence of light and air, sun and green crop the winter damages were ironed out again, even starved-out horses recovered and became smooth in pelt. Naturally flies and mosquitoes were more frequently a pasture pest. In some bushy regions it was hardly possible in the period of the horse flies to pasture the horses or in regions endangered by ticks it had to be stopped completely because of the existence of the Piropas mosses. In the place of pure oats oat-rye mixtures were fed too. The quality of the mixture, the percentage of the rye addition or, respectively, the accustoming to the mixture were decisive for the digestibility of this fodder. Several colic illnesses were connected with the oat-rye mixture. Corn, too, was fed, whole kernels, roughly and finely ground. Disadvantages were not observed, especially if the horses were watered before the feeding. They also got used to the black oats quickly. To supplement the mineral substance of the hey, grown on acid swamp and woody soil, sometimes salt mixtures and feeding lime were additionally given. It is self-evident that the mildued hey and straw was made as usable as possible by shaking, airing, sunning and by sprinkling with salt water.

To the initial equipment of the troop belonged a feed bag of cotton~~z~~. According to ~~ea~~ its care it stayed usable for a longer or shorter time. The daily use finally lead to disintegration of the texture, however, it could be broken in a frozen condition or sometimes was lost. To replace it one met more and more difficulties the longer the war lasted. Therefore it had become the custom that every driver had built a manger of wood for two horses or two small ones and carried them with him. In longer-lasting quarters parmanent mangers were built, too. In emergencies one fed from the cleanly swept ground or from shelter halves. One also made use of fodder cases of 30 square cm occasionally, when it became necessary to create a replacement for the water-bucket. For reasons of transportation the best suitable for this were containers of wood or tin, which narrowed towards the bottom, respectively diminish conically.

Straw was not to be had for strewing purposes. Principally every blade of straw had to be made usable as fodder straw for the horse. Individually, of course, the condition of the pressed bales was decisive for the use of the straw. Generally the horses stood on bare logs or on the bare ground. In favorable cases ferns, heather, saw dust, wood shavings, paper, sand in the rearward half of the stand and such formed the litter. On one side the stable became wet and cold and showed damageing influence on hoof, skin and hair covering, on the other side the presumptuous, western European horses suffered under the lacking comfort.

Generally there was no lack of good and sufficient drinking water. On the advance one alway met again creeks, rivers, ponds and lakes or abundant wells. Necessary, however, was again and again instructions and directives to put in sufficiently long and frequent periods of drinking. Just because during the advance every thing is being pulled out of the horses, what could be gotten out, it was necessary to satisfy their need for water under all circumstances. The even, pulling tempo during sun burn, on sand roads, up the hill and down the hill or in the mud of the softened and spoiled roads was quite hard for the horses. Heart and lungs gave their utmost. Thousands of horses contracted chronic heart ~~and~~ lung ailments, of which the died or they suddenly collapsed of acute symptoms. The good horse worked in the sewer until it staggered or fell down. Timely rest periods and stops and abundant watering were actually decisive for the maintenance of the tactical preparedness of the armies. During the winter the drinking water in may placed was dipped out of ice holes in ponds, lakes or creeks. The horses were lead from the stables and earth fortifications to the water wholes. Possibilities to heat the water were small. The horses also became accustomed to the cold water. Disadvantages and illnesses did not develop from that, especially if one saw to the best possible heating of the horse (covering). It probably can be stated as correctly that the water under the ice is still a little warmer than the water, which cools of over night till the freezing point in drums in the stables. In special cases drinking water was produced by melting snow in tin buckets or the horses helped themselves improvisedly and scantily by taking the crystalline snow. But it was always necessary that the driver carried his tin bucket with him.

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