



Three-field system: the fallow year

This year, this field is in the “fallow year” in the three-field system. The picture on the right illustrates the three years of the three-field system. Fallow means that the earth is resting, that nothing at all is being grown. But if you are here in the autumn perhaps you will see newly sown autumn rye growing on the field in front of you.

SCRATCHING WITH AN ARD

The most important work during the fallow year was to remove weeds and prepare the field for sowing. This was done by working the soil with an ard. An ard was an implement that scratched furrows in the soil with an ardshare, a pointed, ironclad wooden wedge. The ard was often pulled by oxen and the person walking behind had to press the wooden wedge into the ground. The ard was driven along and across the whole field, the more times it was done, the greater the harvest after sowing. The work was heavy and took a long time.

FIELD TILLER

Today the farmer in Karum uses a modern implement, a so-called field tiller. The implement gives the same result as the ard did in the 19th century, but the work is much quicker.

FERTILISING

The only time the fields were fertilised was during the fallow year. The fertiliser gave nutrition to the soil so that the rye and barley grew better. On the lime rich soil of Karum however, fertilising was not as important as the work with ards. Today the fields are not fertilised at all. The fertiliser was manure from all the livestock that were in cattle sheds in the winter. The people of Karum probably spread the animal manure on the fields closest to the farmyards. On Öland the animal manure was also mixed with seaweed fetched from the beaches.

AFTER-GRAZING

When the fields had been harvested there were often sparse remains of barley and other plants. The cattle could then be let into the field for after-grazing to reduce the amount of weeds. Nowadays only a few fields are used for grazing during the fallow year.

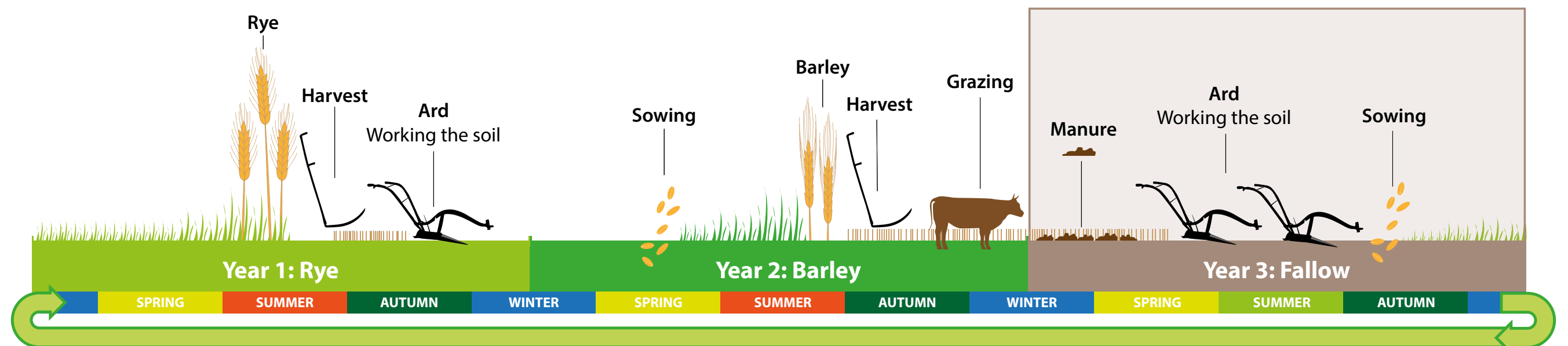


Illustration: The County Administrative Board in Kalmar County.

1. Close-up of a field tiller. The pointed steel blades scratch the earth in the same way as the ardshares did in the past.
2. No time is wasted when the fields are prepared today. The 13 blades of the field tiller do the same job as 13 ard blades pulled by 26 oxen!
3. Oxen harnessed to the ard in Hönstorp in central Öland in the early 1920s. Per Karlsson is holding the reins and beside stands his wife Kristina.
4. Ard in Öland Museum in Himmelsberga.



Photo: Kalmar County Museum photo library.



Other photos: The County Administrative Board in Kalmar County.



Länsstyrelsen
Kalmar län