

Handle the Colts During Winter.

During the winter months there is little to do on the average farm but look after the stock, and as a consequence, there is considerable spare time, except where help is very scarce. No more profitable or enjoyable recreation can be found for the boys on the farm at this season than handling the colts. Profitable because it enhances the future value of the colt, and at the same time tends to make the boys proficient horse-men. Enjoyable because it affords a pleasant pastime for the boys, provided, of course, they are naturally fond of animals, and horses in particular; and to none other should the handling of colts be entrusted. To the boy, large or small, who likes a horse, it is a source of pleasure to handle a colt, and observe him day by day, as his education advances, become more and more tractable and obedient. To the man or boy who likes horses, it gives greater satisfaction and pleasure to handle a green or partially green one, in either harness or saddle, and to daily observe improvement, than to drive or ride a thoroughly handy one in which we do not look for improvement. In the first case he observes the fruits of his patience and often labor, and it encourages him to increased efforts; while in the latter he neither looks nor tries for improvement, and while he thoroughly enjoys his drives or rides, he does not feel that his skill or efforts are accomplishing anything in the way of improvement, because it does not give him the same degree of pleasure as the handling of one in which improvement is not only possible, but necessary. When boys begin to handle colts they should do so under instructions, as while the average boy will, no doubt, in time be able to learn from experience the right and the wrong methods of doing, he is liable to get both himself and the colts into bad habits during the process, hence the fathers or elder brothers should teach the boys how it should be done. There should be a method. There are many good methods and more bad ones. Above all things, kindness, but firmness, should be practiced. Conflicts or differences of opinion or inclination between the boy and the colt should, if possible, be avoided, but when such occur, the boy should always be in a position to gain the mastery without the use of violence or cruelty. This can be accomplished only by the use of strong and proper appliances, such as cannot be broken by the colt, and with which, by the aid of the skill and activity of the boy, the superior strength of the colt can be overcome. Colts should be handled when quite young, and their education yearly continued during the winter months, and then little or no trouble is experienced when their services are required in the team or single harness or saddle. In many cases the early handling or education is neglected, and "breaking," as it is properly called in this case, does not commence until the animal is required for work, and then it is done all at once. While such treatment often makes good and well-mannered horses, we cannot expect it to give as satisfactory results as where the education was commenced early, and, consequently, was more gradual. When there are unhandled or green colts of different ages, let the boys begin to handle them. The weanlings should be taught to lead and stand tied; should be led beside a saddle horse or behind a sleigh or cutter. The exercise is good for the colt, and the education is invaluable. They should be handled all over, their feet lifted, and, if necessary (which is often the case), rasped or cut down to the normal shape. They should be kindly but firmly spoken to and treated, and, of course, when they are being petted, many and variable words may be used, the signification of which the colt is not expected to understand, but he understands by the tone and actions of the person that he has nothing to fear; but when we are giving him a lesson we should use few words, we should pronounce them distinctly, each word should indicate a specific action, and we should always use the same word for any specific action. For instance, we say "whoa" when we want him to stand still, "back" when he is wanted to step backwards, "go on" when we want him to move forwards, "steady" when we want him to slacken his gait, etc., etc. We should avoid the use of the same word to express different ideas or demand different actions. How often do we hear drivers say "whoa," or "whoa, back," when they simply want the horse or team to go more slowly, use the same expression when they really want the horse to stand, and the same when they want him to back. The indiscriminate use of words must confuse a horse, and while horses so driven are often handy and well-mannered, it is because they have become so accustomed to it that they associate certain actions with certain tones of voice, or with the degree of pressure exerted upon the bit, even though the same words are used for each action. This, we claim, is wrong, hence it is wise to be careful in respect to the words we use in handling colts. The yearlings, two- and three-year-olds, if not already halter broken, should be treated as the weanlings, and then should be "given a mouth," or, in other words, should be "bitted." This should not be done by driving or riding, but by putting a light bridle with an ordinary snaffle bit on the colt, and leaving it on for a few hours each day until he ceases to "fight the bit," after which gentle pressure, by the use of the check rein attached to a surcingle should be given, and the pressure gradually increased by shortening the check, until we get him to hold his head in about the position we want. This teaches him to carry a good head, and at the same time to yield to pressure upon the bit; his mouth becomes accus-

tomed to it, and we avoid the sore mouths so often seen in colts when they are driven or ridden without preliminary fitting. Then harness should be put on, and the colt allowed to run in a large box stall or paddock for a few hours each day until he becomes accustomed to having the harness put on, to wearing it, and having it removed without fear or nervousness. He is then ready to be driven, which may be done either with a good-mannered mate or singly. I do not think it wise to drive two colts together at first. In fact, I prefer teaching a colt to go singly first, and then we seldom have trouble when we want him to go with a mate, but many prefer driving him with a steady but prompt old horse first. Whichever we do, I think we should drive him a few times with just the harness before hitching to a rig. It is well to give him a few lessons this way first. Teach him to stand, go on, back, etc., and allow him to see all the sights that are liable to frighten him. When he is hitched we should see that both harness and rig are strong. The idea that "any old thing" is good enough to hitch a colt to is entirely wrong. The "old thing" may break and the colt injure himself or run away, and thereby learn habits that he is very slow to forget. Have things so strong that they are not liable to break, and be in a position to conquer him without violence or harshness if he act badly, as will sometimes occur notwithstanding all our trouble. If driving singly, it is wise to use a kicking strap for the first few times. When tied while hitched a strong rope should be used, and he should be tied to a fence or other object, which will prevent him from either going forwards or around, as he can do if tied to a post. He should be driven a little every day. I think frequent short drives preferable to few long ones, as they do not tire him, and at the same time teach him to be hitched and unhitched. If he will be required for spring work, this training will gradually harden him, and increase both respiratory and muscular vigor, and if he will not be needed in the spring he will have had lessons which he will never forget, and will be handy when we commence to handle him in his next year, or if he be for sale, he can be hitched and shown to the prospective purchaser. If he be a colt of saddle breeding or pattern, he should be taught to go well under saddle as well as in harness. I think it is a pity so little attention is paid to this mode of travel or recreation in the country. Saddle work is both healthy and delightful, and, in my opinion, both boys and girls on the farm should practice it, but I have not space to enlarge on this at present.

"WHIP."

Re Premiums.

Mr. N. Cotton, Simcoe, Ont.: "I received the harmonica and microscope all right, and am highly pleased with them. I think the 'Farmer's Advocate' and Home Magazine" is a strictly high-grade paper."

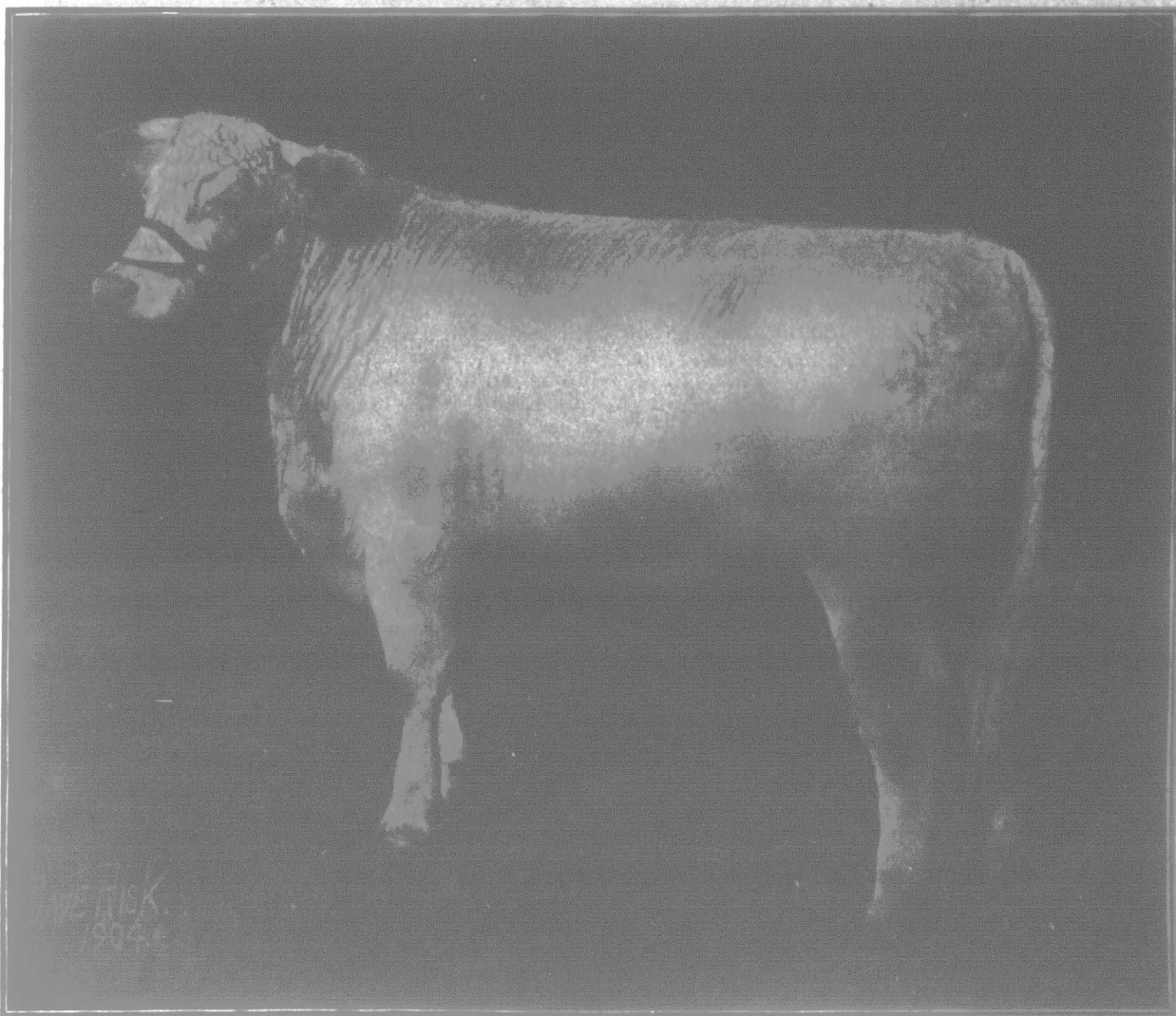
Mr. Henry Schafer, Jr., Oxford, Ont., says: "Please accept thanks for premium knife which I received. It is up-to-date."

Fitting Show Horses.

A yearling that is fed up on oil cake and other soft foods is a most unsatisfactory animal to have to deal with, for he usually carries a load of blubber, which not only is likely to conceal certain faults that he may actually possess, but is likely to suggest the fact that he may possibly have others, which, as a matter of fact, he may not. The most usual criticism that is bestowed upon a horse that is overburdened with flesh is that he is deficient in muscular development, and, beyond a doubt, the accusation is justified by fact. There is only one reliable and safe way to put muscle on a horse, and that is by a long course of regular, slow exercise and judicious feeding. No doubt hard work at a fast pace would procure the result, but its good effects would be neutralized by its sinister influence upon the action. If a horse, and especially a young one, is sent along too much at top speed, or anything near it, the freedom and liberty of its action are sure to suffer, but, on the other hand, no matter how much slow work, such as walking, it gets, no harm will be done, but, on the contrary, the animal, unless it is a very delicate one, will thrive in every respect and lay on muscle.

The importance of supplying a growing colt or filly which is destined for exhibition with sound wholesome food cannot possibly be overestimated. A fattening diet, of course, produces a big appearance, but it is purely artificial, and cannot compare with the looks of a horse which has been on sound, wholesome, nourishing food, which has been enjoyed, as it always is, by a healthy animal in useful work. Unfortunately, there is not sufficient time in many great studs to devote to the proper preparation of their show horses, and even when there is, some owners appear to be more disposed to place reliance on fattening foods than upon those which really benefit the horses and assist in bringing them into the ring in that hard, muscular condition which all practical men rejoice to see.

The main difficulty which has to be faced by exhibitors is one of time, as it is impossible to bring a horse out in blooming condition if his preparation has been hurried. In this respect, a great difference exists between getting a horse fit for the show-ring and training him for a race, and this is a fact which all parties concerned should bear in mind. In the former case, everything goes by appearances; in the latter, the result depends upon the actual performance of the horse, and as many animals run better when apparently half trained than they do when wound up to concert pitch, it is impossible to draw any comparisons between the two cases. At the same time, the fact may be emphasized that the best and safest way to put muscle on a horse is by subjecting him to a long course of slow work.—[Live-stock Journal (British).]



Trout Creek Wanderer.

Yearling Shorthorn steer. First at International Show, Chicago, 1904. Property of W. D. Flett, Hamilton, Ont.