

Draft Horse Production

By Wayne Dinsmore

More land must be put in small grain, and less left in grass, during the next few years. The world's food requirements, in this emergency, can only be met by increasing the acreage of grains immediately available as food for man. More power will be required on the farm to plant and harvest these crops. Labor is scarce. Increased horse power and implements which will permit one man to do as much as two or three formerly did is the only solution of the problem.

Factories are running at top speed. Transportation is being taxed to the utmost. Powerful teams are an essential factor in transportation. They link factory with railroad and one factory with another. They haul the material needed for new structures and aid in building the same. Throughout the whole network of transportation from producer to manufacturer to consumer heavy draft teams play a most important part. Truck and transport companies, guided solely by the balance sheet, declare draft horses are more efficient in short hauls than motors. Evidence that they will hold their place in the cities is overwhelming; but they must be massive, of maximum draft character, and of such structure in feet and legs as to last for a decade and a half in city service.

Farm and city alike will require large numbers of powerful drafters. The demand for the next five or six years will be greater than at any time in the last 20 years.

Armies require horses. Experience has shown they are indispensable. In the Allied armies the proportion has been approximately one horse to every four men, exclusive of cavalry. The British Lord of the Admiralty, speaking before parliament in December, 1917, reported that British fleets had transported more than 2,000,

who lack in teams will pay so much for them this season that they will conclude it is cheaper to raise work horses than to buy them.

Breeding Work Takes Time

Failure to sow a large acreage of wheat in the spring means a limited yield in the autumn. Failure to breed mares makes a short horse crop, but the effects are not noticeable within six months, as in the case of wheat. The shortage in horses does not become manifest till five years later. In 1916 and 1917 less than 40 per cent. of the mares of breeding age—excluding purebred draft mares—were bred. Well-informed horsemen estimate that yearling colts have decreased in number from 172,000—the number shown by the 1910 census—to approximately 1,000,000 for the spring of 1918. This decrease will be felt most acutely in 1920 and 1921. Every effort should be made by well-informed horsemen to guard against this by urging the farmers in their respective sections to breed all suitable mares in 1918.

The greatest obstacle to improvement is the small horse and the unsound horse of any size. Such animals are not marketable. They are not efficient in work. They are present in the United States in millions. Every real horseman would be delighted to see the country rid of these undesirable equines. They are a drag on the market. Prices range from \$20 to \$125 on such animals. Their complete elimination would be a God-send to the industry. Breeders of drafters are not particular regarding the mode of exit taken by small and unsound horses.

The man who owns and works horses under 1,100 pounds is standing in the way of his own financial betterment. If he cannot dispose of them and buy mares that are at least in excess of 1,200 pounds, his only chance is to breed some better ones. Doing this from a foundation of small mares is slow. The process may be hastened by breeding to a very prepotent, heavy-boned stallion that is 16-2 to 17 hands in height, with weight in excess of 1,900 pounds when in breeding condition. The half bloods from such a horse will, if well nourished during the growing period, mature at weights of 1,400 or better. Small mares have produced progeny from such crosses that closely approximated real draft size and character.

More rapid progress, however, financially and otherwise, will be made by selling very small horses at any price they will bring, and then buying good grade, or pure-bred, draft mares.

The Horse and the Tractor

Some farmers are fearful of the tractor. What effect will it have on the need for heavy horses on our farms? Will it eliminate or materially reduce the number of horses in farm use? Developments to date indicate that tractors may supplement, but not displace, heavy draft horses. In fall plowing, when horses are needed in the harvest field, the tractor can be used to advantage; and where there is enough need for belt power to make the tractor pay interest and depreciation charges for the balance of the year it may be well to buy one. The fact remains, however, that the horse is a self-repairing, self-reproducing motive power, and the tractor is not. The horse utilizes roughage, such as corn, fodder, straw and pasturage, produced on the farm, as a considerable share of his fuel, and all fuel for the tractor must be bought. Aside from this, naval and military needs promise to drive internal combustion oils to prices ranging from 90 cents to \$1.25 per gallon, with most stringent regulations regarding its use. Horses can be produced where needed. Tractors require much steel, coal and labor in their production, and tax our transportation systems heavily, both in the shipment of raw material and the finished engines, supplies therefor, and repair parts.

There are thousands of men who can



Percheron Mares and Foals at Pasture

600 horses and mules to Europe for the use of the Allied armies. Figures from the Department of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, U.S.A., show that more than 1,300,000 of these were purchased in the United States. The demand from our Allies continues. To this is added the needs of the United States armed forces, in the proportion of one horse or mule to each four men, exclusive of cavalry. The horses most sought for by all armies are artillery, siege gun and transport kinds. These take horses weighing from 1,150 to 1,700 pounds, sometimes more. The British, in the fall of 1917, undertook to buy 100,000 transport horses—which must weigh over 1,500 pounds after arriving at central markets—and were frankly told by one of the leading dealers that they could not possibly be bought at the price—\$220. They have, however, been purchasing as many of these as possible.

In 1914, at the outbreak of the war, the United States had a vast surplus of horses ranging from 1,000 to 1,500 pounds. That surplus is now nearly exhausted. Horse buyers who formerly had no trouble in buying two carloads per week, now come in with half a car, because they cannot buy more in a week's time. Farmers sold themselves short last summer and fall because of the high price of feed. They are now searching for teams with which to do their spring work in 1918. As a result, prices have advanced appreciably in the last 30 days. Grade draft mares of good type, and sound, are \$50 per head higher than they were in December, and are increasing in value. Men

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