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The Grain Grower's Guide

Published Weekly at 275-277 Sherbrooke Street, Winnipeg, Canada.
Authorized by the Postmaster General, Ottawa, Canada, for transmission as Second Class Mail Matter

Volume II.

WINNIPEG, JANUARY 12th, 1910

Number 24

WESTERN CATTLE TRADE

*Report on marketing conditions with important
By Dr. J. G. RUTHERFORD recommendations. Dominion Live Stock
Commissioner*

In view of the growing importance of the cattle trade of western Canada and also the great need of radical reforms in the transportation and marketing system, THE GUIDE is making arrangements to secure a great deal of information upon this subject. The Dominion Government is well aware of the disabilities under which the live stock raisers of the west are working. This was seen when the Minister of Agriculture appointed Dr. J. G. Rutherford as Live Stock Commissioner, three years ago. Since that time Dr. Rutherford has given considerable attention to the western cattle trade, and has gone carefully into the problem of transportation as well as the facilities for and the advantages of a dead meat trade. Dr. Rutherford published a pamphlet in 1909 on this subject. This pamphlet can be secured for the asking, from the department of Agriculture at Ottawa. It deals with various phases of the question and gives valuable information on the subject of feeding beef steers. As the transportation and marketing is at present the burning question, the part of the pamphlet dealing with this subject, is here reproduced.

PRESENT TRADE METHODS

Dr. Rutherford writes as follows:—"The export trade in western range cattle, as hitherto carried out, has been sinfully wasteful, unbusinesslike and unprofitable to the producer. Cattle wild, excitable and soft of grass, are driven to the railway, held sometimes for days on poor pasture waiting for cars, and finally, after more or less unavoidably rough handling, are forced on board. Once in the cars, they are, not unfrequently, run through to Winnipeg without being unloaded for feed or water. It is 840 miles from Calgary to Winnipeg, and as many shipments originate beyond the first-named point, it may be readily seen what this means, even when the run is a good one. Some shippers unload at Moose Jaw, 440 miles west of Winnipeg, but others claim it is alike more humane and more profitable to run through, as the cattle, being still wild, excited and unaccustomed to handling, not only refuse both feed and water, but suffer much more in the unloading and reloading than they do when left in the cars. On arrival at Winnipeg, they are always unloaded, fed and watered, being, by this time hungry, thirsty and fairly quiet from exhaustion. After being rested, they are inspected, culled and reloaded, the next stop being, as a rule, at White River, 678 miles further east. There they are again fed and watered and after another stage of 755 miles, arrive at Montreal. Here for most of them the land journey ends, although when navigation is closed at that point, it extends to Portland, Boston or St. John, New Brunswick, as the case may be; very rarely to Halifax. At Montreal, however, all are unloaded, fed, watered, rested and carefully inspected by the veterinary officers of this department, whether they are to be shipped by water from there or from some other port. If the latter, they are on arrival, rested and again inspected before going on board the steam-er."

"While the facilities for loading cattle on the ship at St. John are excellent, those at Montreal are not of the best, and this necessitates more and somewhat rougher handling than would otherwise be the case. Even on the ships there is much

room for improvement in conditions. The regulations as regards space, fittings and similar matters, are, oddly enough, drawn up and enforced by the Department of Marine and Fisheries, and although these might, in my opinion, be revised with advantage, this is scarcely the proper place to discuss them.

"One matter, however, I must mention, namely the class of men employed to look after and care for cattle on our Canadian ships. These are, as a rule, picked up indiscriminately, through agents at the port of shipment. These men, known in the trade as 'stiffs,' are often returning emigrants, who have failed,

think we have no feed, or that I should declare a business so conducted as sinfully wasteful?

And still it is profitable; profitable to the middleman who, coolly reckoning on the shrinkage, fixes accordingly his price to the producer; profitable to the commission man who pockets in commission what the middleman takes in profit; profitable to the railway companies; profitable to the steamship lines and profitable to the British butcher who pays only for what he gets and not even that much if, by combination or sharp practice of other kinds, he can manage to keep prices down. To the producer how-

depreciation in both quantity and quality of flesh.

"Our friends in the United States long ago realized the folly of shipping to Europe alive, steers direct from the range. Their range cattle are brought to the middle west, dehorned, if this has not been earlier done, fed for at least sixty days on a ration comprising a liberal allowance of grain, then sent to market, generally in Chicago, and carefully inspected and culled. Those deemed fit for export are then taken to the seaboard by fast trains and in cars specially fitted for feeding and watering en route. They are loaded on these cars under careful supervision, no overcrowding or rough handling being permitted. The men in charge are almost invariably regular salaried employees of the shipping firms, and the same is true of the foremen on the ships and of those working under them.

"As a result of these superior methods, United States cattle, even when originally from the western ranges, arrive in Britain in much better condition than Canadian range cattle, and of course command correspondingly higher prices.

Domesticated Canadians, properly finished, land, as a rule, in excellent condition, and compete closely in price with the best States cattle of the same class. There is no reason why our Canadian range cattle, if treated on similar lines, should not compete as closely with steers from the Western States.

VOLUME OF BUSINESS

The growth of the practice of finishing cattle on dry feed (hay or hay and grain) in the three western provinces, is indicated by statistics of shipments received at Winnipeg from January to June (fed on dry feed), as compared with the shipments from July to December (grass fed) for the years 1906, 1907 and 1908, as follows:—

1906	
East from Winnipeg, Jan.-June,	9,435
East from Winnipeg, July-Dec.,	81,609
For local use, Jan.-June,	9,135
For local use, July-Dec.,	81,469
	151,641
1907	
East from Winnipeg, Jan.-June,	1,487
East from Winnipeg, July-Dec.,	30,062
For local use, Jan.-June,	16,397
For local use, July-Dec.,	32,254
	100,200
1908	
East from Winnipeg, Jan.-June,	19,551
East from Winnipeg, July-Dec.,	86,595
For local use, Jan.-June,	22,842
For local use, July-Dec.,	41,622
	170,088

"The above tables show the percentage of dry fed cattle arriving at Winnipeg for the past three years to have been as follows:—

1906,	16.37 per cent.
1907,	21.62 "
1908,	48.67 "

"The shipments via Winnipeg in no sense include all the cattle produced in the three prairie provinces. To these must be added the large quantity of beef consumed in the local markets, in addition to that shipped to British Columbia and the Yukon. It appears safe to infer that the percentage of winter fed cattle that have gone to Winnipeg, as shown by the above tables, indicates fairly accurately the relative proportion of

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Dr. RUTHERFORD'S RECOMMENDATIONS

- No wild, grass finished steers should be shipped for export.
- All range steers should be dehorned and finished on grain before exporting.
- Proper food and rest should be provided for cattle en route to the coast, and cars should be clean, well-bedded, and in proper condition.
- Loading should be done carefully and the train handled carefully when shunting and moving, and skilled hands should have charge of live stock en route.
- A dead meat trade under effective public control should be inaugurated at once.
- The live stock trade must be continued with the dressed meat trade, and the influence of the two will prevent the fluctuations in price and prevent the robbery of the producer which takes place at the present time.

through drink or other causes, in making things go in Canada, or sometimes simply men looking for a cheap passage, decent enough perhaps, but with no knowledge of cattle, and in many cases quite unaccustomed to the sea. Such men are frequently incapacitated for duty through seasickness, and, in other cases, simply refuse to work, with the result that any who may be capable and industrious are overwrought and the cattle suffer accordingly. In rough weather especially, the feeding and watering are apt to be irregular and insufficient.

ever, and therefore to the country, it is the very reverse, and the odd feature of it all is that if conditions were so amended as to make it profitable for them, the others mentioned above would gain, rather than lose, by the change.

AS IT SHOULD BE

"No wild, grass-finished cattle should be shipped for export. In a country like western Canada which, one year with another, is full of all kinds of material for winter-feeding, there is no excuse for the sending forward, for immediate



Barns and Horses of James Barrett, Bagot, Man.

Is it a matter for wonder that after a journey of 5,000 miles, made under such conditions, our grass-fed range steers arrive in British lairages gaunt and shrunken, looking more like stockers than heaves, that our Scotch friends

export, animals which, owing to their lack of domestication and the nature of their food, cannot, under ordinary circumstances, reach their destination on the British market without a woeful