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## SHALL WE BREED HEIFERS YOUNGER OR OLDER IN FUTURE?

Leading Dairy Cattle Breeders Express Their Opinion—Many Warnings Against a System of Breeding That is Endangering the Health and Vigor of Cattle of Every Breed

"WHAT will account for so many small, undeveloped, miserable looking specimens of cows with poor constitution, little capacity and less appearance of milk?" This question, asked by Prof. H. Barton of Macdonald College in the New Year's issue of Farm and Dairy, opens up a question as far-reaching as the dairy industry itself. In many herds where both breeding and feeding apparently have been right we find undersized cows of poor constitution and not giving anything like the amount of milk and butter fat that we have a right to expect from cows of good breeding. Many grade herds, perhaps the majority, are composed of smaller and more weakly constituted cows than were found in the same herds ten or twenty years ago. And in the meantime feeding methods have improved. Why is it? Prof. Barton attributes this decreasing size and vitality primarily to the practice, which he considers altogether too common, of breeding heifers to come in for the first time when too young to stand the strain that maternity imposes upon them. Consequently they receive a check in their development from which they never recover. Prof. Barton's conclusions attracted much attention among Farm and Dairy readers. To get the opinion of other successful cattle breeders on this question that is of such vital interest to every dairyman, an editor of Farm and Dairy recently discussed the question with many of our leading breeders: We give herewith the opinions expressed by a few of them:

### AN AYRSHIRE BREEDER'S OPINION

"And what do you think of Prof. Barton's conclusions?" we asked Mr. Hector Gordon, the President of the Ayrshire Breeders' Association. Mr. Gordon was standing in front of his cattle at the recent Ottawa Winter Fair.

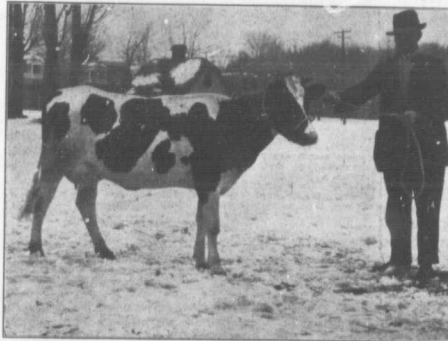
"It is time that a note of warning was sounded on this subject," answered Mr. Gordon, as he threw a few more mangels in front of the cow that he was about to take out to compete for the De Laval Cup. "His ideas are just about O.K. Too many of our Ayrshire breeders are breeding their heifers when they are mere calves, and as you remarked in Farm and Dairy, when the heifer freshens, it is a case of one calf having another calf. In our own herd, our cows all freshen from August to December, dropping their first calves when about three years old."

"Have you had any personal experiences that would justify your conclusions?" we next asked.

"Yes, we have had the evil of early breeding

demonstrated to us conclusively, though not purposely. We had a bunch of six heifers of similar breeding, size, and age. Two of them were accidentally bred in June and came in when 26 months old. The other four did not freshen until 30 to 32 months old. I have the six yet, and the four that freshened late, without exception, are bigger, stronger cows and better milkers than are the two."

"I have seen evil results of early breeding in



Is the System of Breeding That This Heifer Represents Advisable?

Princess Geraldine, the Holstein heifer here illustrated, competed in the class for heifers under 24 months in a dairy test at Ottawa. Prof. H. Barton, of Macdonald College, forcibly condemns such early breeding. Mr. E. Dowler, the owner of the heifer, is only experimenting with the system and is not any too sure of its ultimate success. The question is, will this heifer develop into an large and strong a mate as she would have under other conditions. Read the opinion of several leading breeders on this question as expressed in the article adjoining.

—Photo by an editor of Farm and Dairy.

many herds," continued Mr. Gordon. "In following up the fall fairs and the winter dairy tests, I find that when a breeder gets right down and tells the truth about his breeding experience, he will agree that it is a mistake to breed a dairy heifer to come in under two and one-half years old at least."

As we were leaving the dairy stable, we ran across Mr. R. Dowler of Ottawa. Mr. Dowler informed us that he has always been breeding his heifers to freshen around two and one-half years old, but recently he has been testing the efficiency of earlier breeding, and while he is not yet sure of results, he has about come to the conclusion that later breeding is more advisable. "I have two cows," said he, "that are half-sisters and which I expected to do about equally well at the pail. One freshened at two years and the other at two and one-half years old. I have both cows yet. They have passed through several milking periods, and the second is by all means the biggest and best cow."

"If a heifer is in good heart and large I would rather have her come in at two and one-half years old than later," remarked Mr. N. Dymont of Hamilton, who for 16 years has been a prominent figure at our Winter Fair dairy tests. "That is, providing she calves in the fall or winter," hastily added Mr. Dymont. "A spring calf has a hard row to hoe with the hot weather of July and August militating against it, to say nothing about the flies and short pasture. If not well cared for, the spring calf is nearly spoiled before it gets into the stable. My observation is that a heifer freshening at two years will have a weakened constitution. Our idea is to breed strong dairy cows, and these cannot

be secured where the constitution is weakened by early breeding. As good cows as I have ever owned have come in nearer four years old than two."

"Do you think that letting the heifers run so long would give them an inclination to be beefy," we asked.

"If a heifer is inclined to be beefy she would be beefy earlier, as well as later; if she is bred for milk, deferred breeding will not hurt her," answered Mr. Dymont with the wisdom born of experience.

### MR. CHERRY'S TESTIMONY

"I was much impressed with the article written by Prof. Barton in your issue of January 2nd, 1913," writes W. H. Cherry, Garnet, Ont. "For those farmers in Canada who do not feed their young stock quite so liberally as some of we Holstein breeders, Prof. Barton's suggestion to delay breeding a few months until the heifers have attained some proportions should be doubly valuable. There are, however, some exceptions where a man must use his own best judgment when to breed. With the Holstein cow, the case,

is rare where a good cow, made to freshen at two years of age, would not have made a more profitable animal had she been left to freshen at, say, 30 months.

"I have a cow, Queen Wilhelmina (8193), six years old on February 28th, 1913. She has given birth to four different calves, and is due now to freshen again the fifth time. She freshened at just two years, and last year gave as high as 84 lbs. of milk a day in making an A.R.O. record. I weighed her to-day, and she tipped the beam at 1,760 lbs.; a heavy and persistent milker and a show cow. One of her heifers, not two until April, will weigh over the one-half ton.

"I have been like most young breeders, a little over anxious to get a herd quickly, which accounts for breeding heifers to freshen at two years of age. I believe that if every pure bred heifer of the Holstein breed in Ontario were to freshen not later than two and one-half years for the next 10 years, it would be a great step for the advancement of our great dairy breed."