Farm Experiences

ACTUAL VALUE OF DRAFT CROSSES

In discussing the war trade in horses recently, H. McNair, of Ellsworth and McNair, Chicago, large horse dealers of that market, estimated that the average prices for the different classes of horses actually accruing to farmers, or, in other words, the prices which the farmers realized for the horses on the farm, last year were substantially as follows: Cavalry horses, $115 per head; French artillery horses, $140 per head; British artillery horses, $165 per head; draft horses weighing over 1,650 pounds, about $215 to $240 per head. In other words, light weight horses ranging around 1,000 to 1,100 pounds have brought farmers $115 each, but one cross of draft horse blood on the same mare that was used to produce this light cavalry horse would have produced a horse ranging from 1,200 to 1,500 pounds in weight, depending upon the conditions under which said half-blood drafter came to maturity. Those that were not well fed out would naturally be lighter in weight at maturity, while those that received an abundance of food, permitting of full development, would range from 1,400 to 1,500 pounds, so that the first cross of draft blood raised the value from $115 to $140 or $165 per head. The selection of half-draft blood mares, weighing from 1,350 to 1,500 pounds, for breeding to good draft stallion of first class type and conformation will result, as long experience has abundantly shown, in horses of good draft type and conformation weighing from 1,600 to 1,800 pounds at maturity if they are allowed plenty of food for full development, and these horses have brought prices ranging in excess of $200 on the farms. In other words, one cross of good draft blood increases the value of the progeny from light weight mares from $35 to $50, and a second cross on the half-blood mares will increase the value from $35 to $50 more, so that the first two crosses of draft sires on ordinary light weight mares will increase the value of the progeny resulting from $70 to $100 per head. This is not theory, but has been proved over and over again in the sales of horses occurring during the past two years.

The farmer who has been obliged to sell his horses at $115 per head, while his neighbors using the same kind of mares, but who bred to stallions of draft type and good quality, have sold their surplus at prices ranging from $140, $165 up to $225 per head, sees in a financial way the direct contrast in the value of light horses as compared with the value of horses carrying one-half or three-quarters of draft blood. This is doing more to increase the demand for good stallions of weight with good conformation than anything that has occurred in the past fifteen years.

BOYS' AND GIRLS' CLUBS

Extension Bulletin No. 10, of the Manitoba Department of Agriculture, entitled, "Boys' and Girls' Clubs," just issued, outlines the work proposed for the Manitoba Boys' and Girls' Clubs for 1917. The membership of these clubs has now reached almost to the 13,000 mark. Twelve contests for the young folks are proposed in 1917 as follows: 1, Manual Training; 2, Grain Growing (boys 15 to 20 years only); 3, Pig, Calf or Colt Raising; 4, The Farm and Home Garden; 5, Poultry Raising; 6, Cookery; 7, Garment Making; 8, Canning and Preserving; 9, Noxious Weeds; 10, Dairy Contest; 11, Flower Growing; 12, Essay Writing. Copies of the bulletin may be had by writing the Extension Department, Manitoba Agricultural College, Winnipeg.

FEEDING 227 STEERS OUTDOORS

One of the most consistent feeders of beef cattle in Western Canada has been Colonel H. A. Mullins, who commenced feeding indoors in Manitoba on his stock farm at Binscarth about 25 years ago, and has fed cattle every year since. This year there are 227 steers feeding on his farm on Portage road 30 miles west of Winnipeg. Last year he fed 100 steers, putting 211 lbs. on each, and turning them off during winter at 1411 lbs. each. For the last twenty years he has been feeding steers outdoors, and has found it more profitable than feeding inside if the cattle are properly handled. The system followed by Col. Mullins is to purchase well grown, strong, thrifty steers in good condition during the month of October, put them on his farm for a while on late green pasture and then put them in the winter feed lot. Practically every year during the month of October there is a break in prices on the Winnipeg Stock Yards of quite a serious nature. The Colonel has usually been astute enough buyer to get in on this break and has thereby been able to increase his profits considerably.

He usually has his cattle dehorned before the weather becomes too cold. After cold weather sets in he feeds lightly on the start with oats and barley crushed as a grain ration and with plenty of hay in the feeding racks. If hay is not available, good oat straw will go very far to taking its place, and there have been many good steers wintered over in Western Canada with nothing but oat straw. The grain ration, which is usually started with about three pounds per head per day, is raised gradually so that during the last month of feeding the amount will be about ten pounds daily of crushed oats and barley, equal portions.

Good straw sheds to break the wind and a straw roof to protect the cattle from snow falling on their backs is very necessary, but beyond this accommodation no other buildings are needed. The shed should be bedded with straw each day. The lumps may easily be removed with a stoneboat when the straw shed is well bedded. It does not take a very large shed to hold 35 to 40 steers when dehorned. The cold does not hurt them, as nature provides a good heavy coat of hair, and when given meal it seems to warm them up so that after a short time of grain feeding they will commence to lick themselves. The average gain should be from 2 to 2½ or up to 3 pounds per day.

As stated, the price in October is usually lower than any other time during the year. By buying steers in good condition at that time a ready market has usually been found some time during January. Of course, if cattle are not in good condition by that time it would pay better to carry them on somewhat later. As a matter of fact most men do. Col. Mullins fully believes the good markets we are now experiencing will be strong enough during the next five years to warrant a good margin of profit on steer feeding operations. He believes in buying in sufficient numbers that a farmer can ship his cattle in himself when they are ready and not find it necessary to sell to a drover who will take away a very large margin of the profit. It is well to ship to a good, reliable commission salesman, one who is a good judge of beef cattle and who knows sufficient to realize the value of what he has to sell.

Last fall good steers could be bought on the Winnipeg market for 5½ to 7 cents a pound, and if they were bought then in good condition they could be turned off now at from 9 to 10 cents. Colonel Mullins believes that cattle feeding, which has made the farmers to the south wealthy, can be carried on just as well or better in this country, because there is less dampness and a smaller investment required in buildings. Oats and barley have proved to be equally as satisfactory feeds as corn, and the growing of barley he finds has also helped to keep his land very much cleaner.

Part of a herd of 227 steers being wintered in the open on the farm of Col. H. A. Mullins, Binscarth, Man. Col. Mullins has been feeding cattle outside in Manitoba for twenty years, and finds it more profitable than feeding inside if the cattle are properly handled. Read his experience.

GROWING PEAS IN SASKATCHEWAN

In your department of Farm Experiences I have not as yet noticed any article on pea growing. I have experimented with peas for the last six years, and find that even with the least scientific cultural methods I have been very successful. The variety that I have used in my experiments has been the Blue Belle. They may be classed as a small pea, light blue in color and considered a standard variety, tho principally grown for table use in the Fraser Valley, B.C., and the Puget Sound country, Washington. I brought a small quantity with me when moving here from the latter state. My first year's results were a failure from the fact that I seeded them too late, about May 15. They froze so badly in the latter part of August that only about 30 per cent. germinated the next year. My neighbors gave me the horse-laugh for attempting such an impossibility. I answered that my laugh would be in order eventually.

The next year I decided to seed them earlier and did so on May 5, with the encouraging result that what germinated made a good yield and ripened early enough to permit me to get them harvested before the frost. The following year I seeded on May 1, and made a record crop of 40 bushels. Ever since I have made it a point to seed them as early as the wheat. Seeded at the same time they mature from a week to ten days earlier than wheat. In later years I have experienced no anxiety in respect to early frost catching them before ripening.

The cultural methods employed were about the same as for wheat, with one exception. I prefer to plant them deeper, about two and a half inches on fall plowing, using two and a half bushels of seed. I have been repeatedly asked what kind of land would I prefer to seed them on. Well, here is where the greatest advantages of growing peas come in. The function of restoring fertility to the land is a great one with them. I aim to sow them on the oldest cultivated land I have. I consider the pea ground just as good for wheat as summer-fallow. A few hints re harvesting might be in order. Since locating here I have been unable to secure a pea-harvesting attachment to the mower similar to what we used on the coast. I have now ordered one from there in time for next harvest, after spending all summer trying to have the local dealers secure one for me. I have heretofore contented myself with the mower and two men to pitch them to the side. This method is both expensive and wasteful. Stacking them is proceeded with after one to three days, providing a machine is not secured to thresh them. I have experienced a great deal of difficulty in getting them threshed without splitting them. However, this year I got them threshed very satisfactory after a little parleying with the thresherman as to the proper method.—M. P. H.—Spalding, Sask.

TO TEST YOUR OWN SEED

Anyone can test seed for himself by putting one hundred seeds taken "just as they come" but representative of what he is going to sow from the grain he wishes to test, in soil in a plate, box or other convenient receptacle, and keeping it moistened, but not wet, in some place where it will not be too warm in the daytime, and where it will be cooler, but will not freeze, at night. The alternation of temperature favors germination. By noticing the number of plants produced, whether they come up quickly and are strong or weak, one can determine the suitability of the grain for seeding purposes more accurately than from the results of

Continued on Page 16