

STOCK

Selections of Rams, Improving and Building Up Flocks—Points to be Considered.

In buying a ram it is not alone sufficient that we pay a good long price, though it does usually follow that the higher the price the better the individual. What we want to get, and the only kind we can afford to invest our money in, is one with lots of size, character and individuality; with personal merit; strong in the points where we desire improvement in our existing flock to be made; a ram that is a ram right from the ground up; one that has that bold masculine bearing, that makes him look as if he would beget strong, sturdy lambs, singly at least, in pairs as much as possible; lambs that would have lots of size, strength, and vigor in their youth, that would grow rapidly and cheaply; that are well fleshed and have close heavy fleeces. A ram possessed of all these qualities and characteristics would be cheap at any price, and if the flock was one we were building up year by year by selecting ewe lambs for breeders, such a ram's influence is immeasurable. He will in fact be the entire flock, and inside of five years of judicious selections are yearly made of his female progeny, and if the individuals chosen to succeed him as sires, have merit and character equal to his, the flock that then exists will be entirely of his creation. There is an old saying handed down from somewhere, that the sire is half the herd and though hackneyed and common place the statement, is literally and absolutely true. The male, everything else being equal, furnishes the offspring with one-half the qualities that go to make up its individuality. The female supplies the other half. But in this case the ewe produces only one or two lambs a year and influences the character of exactly that number. The ram, on the other hand, passes his personality to every lamb produced in the flock. Choose him wisely, accomplish this, and you have determined at least half the character of your next lamb crop. But it is very likely he is of stronger prepotency than most of the ewes, that is, able to transmit his qualities more surely and strongly to the progeny, which is usually the case in a well bred sire, then the ram represents much more than half the flock. In this case more than half the characteristics of the lamb, or the stronger and predominating half will come from the sire. If he is an individual superior in breeding to the females—and this will be true where a purebred ram is used on a grade flock—the characteristics he transmits to the offspring will be of more value (of higher quality or greater quantity) than those that come from the ewe. In this sense again the influence of the sire is predominating and he will be more than half the flock.

But then a ram will be kept with the same ewes for several years, each year he will start out a generation of lambs more than half of whose characteristics and strength have come from himself. This single step is a great improvement. But get as successors to him rams of similar type and breeding, mate them with these improved offspring of their predecessor, and they carry the improvement forward another step, fixing the desired qualities more strongly in the progeny which they beget, ensuring that those qualities will be transmitted more surely by the dam, and thus eliminating defects or undesirable characters that have come from the mother's side. In this way from generation to generation the succession of well selected sires goes on increasing and intensifying the improvement of the flock. And sheep are a class of live stock capable of being rapidly improved in this manner. The ram soon becomes three-quarters, seven-eighths of the flock, and in a few he is practically the whole. So the sire may be much more than half the flock, whether judged by the strength, quality or accumulated effect of the characteristics he transmits. In a few years and at slight expense, slight at least comparatively speaking, a poor scrappy, run out bunch of ewes may be transformed into a well set up, profit making flock. But you have to select your males carefully and wisely to do it.

When one is buying a ram which has been used he can form an estimate of him by inspecting the offspring. If they are correct in type and breeding, if the ewes have produced a good

of liquids in considerable quantities requires care. The head of the animal must be elevated, probably the better way being to pass the halter-shank over a beam or through a ring in the ceiling and draw on it until the head is so high that the mouth is higher than the throat, then the liquid is poured out of a bottle in small quantities into the mouth; when the patient swallows, a little more is poured out of the bottle, etc. If large quantities are poured into the mouth, and the animal does not swallow promptly, there is great danger of some passing down the windpipe and setting up mechanical bronchitis or causing suffocation. In drenching cattle, the head can be kept elevated by the operator with his thumb and finger in the nostrils. The ox will swallow much faster than the horse, in most cases; at the same time, care must be taken not to allow the liquid to run too fast. When small quantities of fluid are to be given to the horse, it can be done nicely by injecting well back into the mouth with a 2-ounce syringe. Powders can be given either in damp food, in water, or placed well back on the tongue with a spoon. When the bulk is large, as with an aloetic purgative, it is often given in the form of a ball. It requires some practice to enable a man to give balls readily. In future issues we will mention briefly, in detail, the use of the instruments and drugs above enumerated.

"WHIP."

How to Treat the Shying Horse.

Shying is not only one of the commonest of equine faults, but it is also, especially if persistent in a horse of mature age, one of the most difficult to eradicate. Yet, there is perhaps no vice which, as a rule, is less intelligently, and therefore, less successfully, combated.

That there is no special treatment for shying is conceded by most horsemen; there could scarcely be one, as shying may arise from a variety of causes. The one essential feature in treatment of shying, from whatever cause arising, is patience, patience, and again, patience.

Fear, especially in young horses, is the most frequent cause of shying, and in the opinion and experience of the writer, shying from fear is the easiest to deal with, and the most certain of cure; for there is nothing to which a horse will not become accustomed and indifferent if handled with patience and intelligence.

The utter disregard of flying, snorting, smoking motor-cars by city horses is now so much a matter of course as to attract attention only when its absence in country horses compels one to pull up, and frequently to show the driver how to pass the car without accident.

The sight of trained cavalry horses lying down while volley after volley is fired from rifles resting on their bodies, is another example of the adaptability of the equine mind to abnormal environment. The overcoming of fear in a horse, is, in the writer's opinion, at least, simply a matter of patience and gentleness. When in the West, I bought several thoroughbreds that had never been in a city, and proceeded to break them to saddle.

The chief difficulty was to accustom them to the trolley-cars which came along the roads at any speed up to thirty miles an hour.

My plan was to ride quietly to the terminus, and wait, at a respectful distance, the advent of a car. When it was stationary, I spent the ten minutes of its stay in riding round it in circles of gradually diminishing size, but never trying to force the horse nearer than he could be coaxed to approach. Generally, in less than an hour, the horse would go right up to the car and accept caresses from the conductor.

The next step was to follow the starting car, which, luckily, went slowly for the first mile, trotting behind and alongside, till the horse took no notice of it whatever. After that it was merely a matter of meeting cars at points where they moved slowly, till gradually, the horse grew accustomed to face them at any speed.

In teaching a horse to be fearless of any strange, and therefore, to him, alarming object, there are three rules of conduct to which there is no exception: NEVER speak sharply, NEVER use your whip, and NEVER urge him forward with a tight rein. A frightened or nervous horse is psychologically the equivalent of a frightened child. Ward off one in his senses expert to cure his child, usually by scolding or whipping him, or by suddenly by the arm?

The horse that shies, not from fear, but apparently from sheer good spirits of from some cause not intelligible to the human mind, is much more difficult to treat. Complete cure is frequently impossible, though great improvement may be expected from careful handling.

The best Irish hunter I ever possessed I bought for the ridiculous sum of twenty-five guineas (about one hundred and thirty dollars) owing to the fact that he was the worst shier I ever threw a leg over. The suddenness with which he would stop when going fast, and wheel round, was, especially in harness, positively dangerous.

My first experience with him in harness and under saddle were not encouraging; all my efforts to cure his shying were vain till I put him as leader in my tandem-cart, and found that in that position of comparative freedom from control he was much steadier.

Acting on this discovery, when next he showed signs of shying under the saddle, I just dropped my hand and gave him a free head instead of taking a firm hold of his mouth in order to try to keep him straight; the result was that the shy never developed, and that by a continuance of this treatment, the horse, though never wholly cured, became, to me at least, comparatively comfortable to ride and drive. This was not a case of shying through fear, as the horse shied worse and most frequently at familiar objects, of which on many occasions he took no notice whatever; nor was his sight in any way defective.

The shying seemed to be his idea of a joke to be perpetuated most effectively on the way home after a long day with the hounds, when I was, and he should have been, too tired for such frivolity. The moral of this incident is purely negative; it must not be understood that simply giving a horse his head will invariably, or even generally, cure shying, though it will often, as in the above case, minimize it; but it may be taken for granted that no treatment of shying without the free head will be permanently successful.

That this is even more important in horses that shy from fear than in others, I am convinced by years of experience; and it is after all, as I have explained above, the only rational method of dealing with nervousness.

It is impossible to condemn too strongly the pulling of a horse's mouth, and laying the whip smartly across his back, which is the practice usually seen and popularly advocated "to distract his attention," when a horse shows symptoms of alarm at an approaching object, such as a motor-car; a greater mistake or one more productive of future trouble for the driver, was never made.

The ancient superstition that a horse can think of only one thing at a time, and that, therefore, the whip will divert his attention from the object of his fears, is neither logical, nor tenable in practice.

"Put yourself in his place", is a good motto when dealing with horses. A sudden curtailment of his usual freedom of movement, by tightening the reins, when a nervous horse is looking suspiciously at some strange approaching object, naturally increases his alarm; while use of the whip engenders a fear of the object, which it will take no end of time and trouble to eradicate.

The fact that the approach of the alarming object was quickly followed by punishment naturally produces an association of the two in the equine mind, and a logical objection to face that object again.

The psychology of the free hand in the non-frightened shier, is not so easy to follow, but I can vouch for its success. Do not go to the extreme of letting your reins fall loose; hold them so as to have instant control of your horse's head, but just relax whatever pull you have on his mouth. If he knows you talk to him soothingly; a horse will pass with a rider or driver, whom he knows, many an object that no stranger can persuade him to face.

If riding, never leave your saddle; if driving, you may be compelled from reasons of safety to lead him; when you do so, walk between him, and the cause of his alarm.