

The Canada Lancet

VOL. LXV.

TORONTO, FEBRUARY, 1912

No. 6

EDITORIAL

BOVINE TUBERCULOSIS.

Dr. J. G. Rutherford, Veterinary Director-General and Live Stock Commissioner, has prepared for the Government of Canada a very lucid report on the control of bovine tuberculosis.

He first states that tuberculosis is a widespread disease, affecting animals and man. He also states that it is contagious. It spreads from cow to cow in a herd until most of the animals are infected. This may not attract much attention from the farmer, as the appearance of the disease is so slow. This very feature had long obscured the contagious nature of the disease in man. We can recall a time, not so many years ago, when we were denounced for advocating this view. It is with us now to stay, and good has already come of this belief.

History goes to show that this is an ancient disease, and existed at very early dates. Where it originated or how is not known. The report states that 70 or 80 per cent. of some herds have been found diseased. This entails an enormous loss to the farmers, and must be estimated up in the millions of dollars.

There is the danger of infecting man. Milk is so extensively used as an article of diet, especially among children, that it is necessary to take the utmost care. Dr. Rutherford assumes that the disease can be communicated to man by diseased milk and meat.

The disease is spread among cattle in several ways, such as a diseased animal coughing and expectorating on the grass or other food, by shipping cattle in car boxes that have been infected, by feeding calves on diseased milk, etc.

The author of the report speaks very highly of the value of the tuberculin test. He claims that if this were generally used and diseased animals excluded from the herd much saving would ultimately be effected.