

Profitable Percherons

A description of the type of horse the market is looking for

By Wayne Dinsmore, Secretary, Percheron Society of America

Canada's farmers need more draft horses. The wide areas of tilled land, freedom from obstructions, and the necessity for rapid work in seeding and harvesting place a premium on machinery that will do much work in a short time. Gang plows, large discs and seeders that will cover from one-third to one-half more ground than the ordinary ones, all increase the efficiency of the farmer and his men and reduce the cost of growing crops. Experience has shown that heavy draft horses are the most effective power units that can be used on farms. They utilize fuel, which is cheaper than oil and gasoline, are capable, in most instances, of self repair, and their ability to reproduce their kind gives them a practical advantage over tractors that has not, to date, been counterbalanced. Business men, farmers and bankers in Canada are so thoroughly in accord on this, as the result of the experience of the last ten years, that detailed argument is not necessary.

The advantages draft horses have over light horses in farm work are numerous. The tractive power horses can exert is governed by weight, strength and temperament. Under extraordinary pressure horses can exert from four to six horse power, but under conditions of daily work they exert a pull which is about one-tenth of their working weight. The horse power traction required to move farm implements depends on the soil, climatic conditions, and the condition of implements used. Under favorable conditions five draft horses weighing 1,600 pounds or over, will pull a two-plow gang of 14 inch plows a little more than twenty miles, averaging from five to five and a half acres per day. It will take seven horses that weight from 1,100 to 1,200 pounds to do the same work, and it is not practicable to work seven horses on one gang with the ordinary class of farm labor. It will therefore require two men on single plows, one with four and the other with three light horses, to do the same amount of work that one man will do with five draft horses. The same general ruling applies in seeding, discing and harvesting, for while one man can readily handle five horses on the implements needed, he cannot advantageously nor safely use enough more light horses to give him equivalent power. The use of draft horses, therefore, increases directly the amount of work one man can do in the field, and in actual practice the work is better done when drafters are used. When to this we add the fact that less barn room is needed, and less labor required in handling the heavy horses than is necessary where more light horses are used to make up equivalent power, the advantage becomes marked.

The Market Demands Heavy Horses

Besides this, the heavy horses sell more readily and at higher prices when surplus is to be sold. Light weight horses have been bought at prices ranging from \$110 to \$150, while draft horses have brought from \$200 to \$300 each. This is an important factor, for every well managed farm has a few surplus horses to sell annually, and the readier sale and higher prices realized for draft stock are factors which must appeal strongly to all thinking farmers. Maximum cash returns are what we are all interested in, and this we obtain from drafters used in farm work.

Growers of the Grain Growers' Guide are aware of the value of good seed grain, and must also realize the value of good seed stock in horse flesh. Growers of seed grain receive higher prices for their surplus than do farmers who produce ordinary market grain, and men who grow the pure-bred seed stock needed to improve the common run of horses likewise profit to a greater extent



Percheron grade mares in everyday use at Woodover Farms.

Mr. Dinsmore here makes out a strong brief for the Percheron horse. The value of this article lies in pointing out the desirable characteristics to be aimed at in breeding heavy horses on the farm. It is not intended that it should convey the idea that there is any one best breed of draft horses. The choice depends upon individual tastes, but the chief thing to bear in mind is that the market demands a high class grade or pure-bred heavy draft horse. To supply these farmers must decide on a suitable breed, get an ideal, and only use purebred draft sires of this particular breed on their mares, always keeping this ideal in mind.—Ed.

than do those who are contented with average horses. Incompetent farmers cannot successfully grow and market seed grain, and by the same token men must



Pure-bred Percheron mares in corral at Bar U Ranch, Pekin, Alberta.

be good farmers and good horsemen to succeed in the rearing and marketing of pure-bred draft horses. Even a bungler can make more money with grade drafters than with light horses; but a man must needs be a competent horseman to succeed with pure-bred stock.

The Desirable Qualities in the Percheron

Of the four great draft breeds—Percheron, Clyde, Shire and Belgian—the Percheron is by far the most popular in the United States, and is rapidly growing in favor in Canada. Approximately two



Pure-bred Percheron mares and foals.

thirds of all the pure-bred draft horses in the United States are Percherons, and Percheron blood predominates in the grade horses as well. Hardiness, easy keeping qualities, docility, great weight, power and endurance, clean legs and good feet are the main points which have carried Percherons into popular favor. Equally important is the propensity of the Percheron when crossed on common mares of non-descript character. The hardiness of the Percheron is shown by the fact that he does well in hot or cold climates, with or without shelter. His easy keeping, good feeding qualities make his maintenance much cheaper than in the case of horses that are fretful—"bad doers"—as horsemen say. It also makes it cheaper to put him in shape for market, and contributes materially to his value in everyday work. Great cartage and teaming companies want a horse that flanks down well and that is a good doer, for they have learned by bitter experience that a horse lacking these qualities soon goes off feed when put into heavy work, and must be laid off for a rest.

Down in Illinois, some thirty years ago, there was a noted stallion known as "King's Europe." He was good in all respects save the one just discussed. He was a hard feeder. This trait was transmitted to many sons and grandsons, which were used on grade mares to produce market geldings; yet even in these the fault was so noticeable that old, observing horsemen would not pay nearly as much for a horse of this strain as they would otherwise have paid. This is merely one concrete case. The easy keeping, good feeding qualities of the Percheron are therefore of substantial commercial value, keenly appreciated by good horsemen. The horse that walks off in the collar like a veteran when first hitched, that does not fret at unusual sights or sounds, and that is quick to learn to obey is a pleasure to handle. Such characteristics we term docility—good horse sense—and this the Percheron possesses in superlative degree. Boys like to work good Percheron teams, fathers feel safe when the boys are handling them, and the feed bills are less. This is another practical point in favor of the breed.

Weight and Quality are Desirable

Mature Percheron stallions usually range from 16.2 to 17.3 hands in height and weigh from 1,700 to 2,100 pounds when in breeding condition—not fat. Mares range from 16 to 17 hands as a rule and weigh from 1,600 to 2,000 pounds when in working flesh. This height and weight, due to heavy bone, powerful sinew and massive musculature, give the Percheron power in the collar which is beyond the average, and with this goes great endurance, due to the great weight, good feeding qualities and level headedness characteristic of the breed. The soldier who keeps his head and conserves his strength outmaneuvers and out-fights the one who does not; and this quality of steadiness and great endurance is one of the strongest points about good Percherons, and one of the most potent reasons for the popularity of the breed. Clean legs, with an absence of feather, appeal strongly to the man who is extending work early and late, and who has little time for grooming. The legs dry quickly, are easily brushed off, and keep free from sores or grease. Only the man who has to contend with horses having coarse, heavy feather can appreciate this to the full, but absence of feather is recognized as a practical point by busy farmers, and this has been of no slight importance in the growth the Percheron has made in America. Labor is scarce and high in price.

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