

Selecting a Proper Sire

The Dignity of Breeding---How Blood Counts---Important Points to Remember

Hundreds of farmers in Western Canada who previous to the last two years had not enough money to buy seed grain for the next spring, have been and are collecting about them the nucleus of a herd of cattle or swine or a flock of sheep. Practically all these men had horses but a great number are also rapidly improving this class of their livestock. Scores of farmers are even beginning in the pure-bred business, who have previously had little experience in handling such stock and in spite of all warnings it is a safe assumption that a good many will see their rosy dreams of wonderful winning herds slowly melt away like the morning mist. And they will never really know why. Many others will make a fair success of it and some doubtless, will do big things. The development of a herd of high-class stock is the most highly specialized job in existence. It necessitates natural adaptability, scientific training, great patience and innumerable sacrifices.

A. H. Sanders, the most wonderfully versatile writer on breed history, portrays well the dignity of the breeder's calling in these words: "The sculptor lures from the solid marble images of grace, beauty or strength that provoke the plaintiffs of the world. His contact with his work is direct. In calling from stone the creatures of his own conception the figures may be shaped at will. Compared with him who has the power to conceive an ideal animal form and call it into life through a profound knowledge of nature's intricate and hidden laws, the greatest sculptor is a mere mechanic. There is no higher form of art than that which deals with the intelligent manipulation of animal life; the modeling of living, breathing creatures in accordance with the will and purpose of a guiding mind. It rises in its boundless possibilities to heights that are fairly God-like. It sounds the depths of the profoundest mysteries of physical existence, verging on the borders of the Infinite itself. The world of human endeavor presents no nobler field of action, no realm of thought demanding a higher order of ability. It is not a task to be lightly undertaken, if one means to deal fairly by the helpless forms confided to his care. If we could but impress this thought indelibly upon the minds of those who engage in this most fascinating pursuit there would be more noble creations and fewer wrecks along the paths of the stock breeding of the future than in the past. Failure to grasp the fundamental idea that the breeder's calling entails, duties and responsibilities which no man can conscientiously ignore, lies at the bottom of failures innumerable."

The Sire is More Than Half the Herd

The above applies of course more particularly to pure-bred stock because in them the blood lines are more closely segregated, but it applies in a great measure to every domestic farm animal that invades our pastures or is tendered in our stables be it pure-bred or grade. The average man must breed up from grade stock and in doing that the corner stone of progress is the pure-bred sire of individuality and good breeding. On the excellence and prepotency of the sire will depend the strength and uniformity of the offspring. "The sire is more than half the herd," is a familiar expression but it is generally speaking true. The sire stamps his in-

dividuality be it good or poor on every calf in the herd during any one particular season, while the dam only producing one calf per season no matter how good she may be cannot exert a very rapid influence in making over a herd. The average farmer has only very ordinary cows to begin with. He cannot hope to sell them and buy a completely new herd. It would be too expensive and it would be unwise in any case. Experience is the great teacher and a successful breeder must acquire that as he goes along.

Hence the great importance of selecting a high-class sire, the best that can possibly be afforded. "Like begets like," and scrubs are no exception to the rule. The farmer who intends buying a bull this spring, and there are hundreds of them, ought to bear this in mind, and get the best possible animal his money will secure. The same is true of those who are selecting a stallion to breed their mares to. The influence of a high-class, prepotent sire cannot be measured. I recall an auction ring in Regina in the fall of 1913. An Alberta breeder just commencing, and with only a fair herd of cows, bought after a great deal of hesitancy a son of Gainford Marquis, the great Shorthorn bull, for something over \$1,100 as a calf. For some time afterward he was sorry he made the purchase. That was as high a price then as \$2,000 would be now. Yet at last year's Calgary bull sale he sold one calf by this bull for \$825 and several others for very high prices. Four calves by this bull alone brought him \$2,725 at Calgary sales and the influence on his whole herd has been a most marked one. There is no doubt in his mind now as to whether he was wise or not. A few years ago Carpenter and Ross, Mansfield, Ohio, among the continent's most noted breeders, sold a young bull to a farmer. After two years Mr. Ross visited the man's place and noticed that this bull's calves were quite unusual but had not been properly cared for or grown out. He advised better care and consignment to the State breeders' sale. At the first sale four calves by this bull averaged nearly \$700 and at the last sale one calf brought \$2,250. A good sire with proper care has put him on the highway to fortune and made cattle breeding a pleasure.

The Average Farmer Horseman

On a recent visit to my home a farmer I know very well had three colts running in a nearby field. One of this trio was one of the best ordinary farm grade colts I have ever seen. At two years old he was nearly 1,700 pounds with a great top and a grand set of legs and feet. I said, "Where did you get that colt?" "Oh, I bred him from such and such a mare. He is by that big Clyde horse of--. What do you think of him? You know I have been offered \$275 for him a couple of times and I don't know but I ought to let him go. I wish I had bred more of this kind long ago. It was the stallion that did it. I know several of his colts that are nearly as good as this one." Here was a farmer who was a good horseman in the ordinary sense of the word. He could see a splint on a horse as far as he could see the horse, he seemed to know if a spavin was coming before it appeared, he knew all the unsoundnesses thoroughly, he was a good driver and had broken dozens of bad colts, he was one of the best feeders I have ever known, he had some drafty mares around 1,400 to 1,500 pounds that

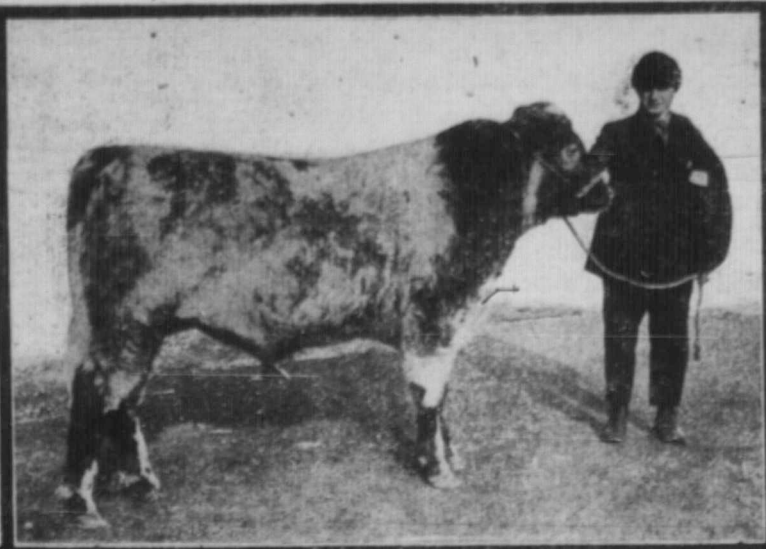
would have raised great colts, but he was eternally wedded to the light general purpose farm horse and had never experienced the real pleasure and profit from producing slashing, good big strong market toppers. This man is typical of thousands of farmers. He was an excellent farmer and a good horseman in many ways, but years of his life have been lost because he bred his mares to blood horses or light drafters or anything but the one thing that could get him what he wanted, i.e. to a good draft horse from 1,800 pounds or so up. The question of which is the most suitable horse for ordinary farm work, the light or the heavy drafter is after all scarcely pertinent. There will always be plenty of the former among the culs from even the best attempts to breed the latter.

The Importance of Masculinity

One of the great outstanding characteristics to be looked for in selecting a sire is masculinity. It is the finest indication of prepotency. A stallion with a mare's head is generally apt to be a poor breeder. A bold, strong masculine appearance is got by inheritance and where accompanied by other necessary qualifications is of great importance. This is the more important where there is a great diversity of females to be bred to. No one bull can be expected to get equally good results from all cows but the more prepotent he is the more uniform will be his offspring. I know a dual-purpose Shorthorn bull, owned in Saskatchewan, which, off a number of good but rough cows, has got the most remarkably uniform lot of calves, 75 per cent. heifers, that I have ever known any bull to sire. Nearly all beautiful dark reds with a few roans, alike in their heads, straight in their lines and wonderfully good in the udders, they are a grand object lesson in prepotency.

Individually the beef bred bull should have style, strength of every masculine character and vigor. A strong development of the neck and whole front is an excellent indication. A short head, wide between the eyes and with large nostrils, wide, strong jaw, horns not too coarse, a short thick strongly muscled neck neatly attached to the head and nicely blended into the shoulders are present in good bulls. If the neck is arched and carrying lots of hair, so much the better. The shoulders should be smoothly rounded over the top, of fair width, not rough or angular and lie smoothly into the body—a serious depression back of the shoulders or a flat, poorly sprung rib there is a very bad fault. It indicates a lack of heart girth, lung power and general vigor. Such an animal cannot produce the strongest offspring, and indeed is apt to get stock too much predisposed to disease. A great breadth and depth of chest should characterize a beef bull. The ribs should be well sprung all the way back from the shoulder to the loin and the top should be straight and strong, as should also, if possible, the underline. A cutting up at the hind flank, giving the hind quarter a shallow, light appearance, is common. Plenty of width is desirable all the way back from the shoulders to the hips, for this is where most of the high-priced meat comes in the finished animal, and a bull which does not have these features cannot get them in his progeny. A nice even covering of mellow flesh is desirable, though the amount of this carried of course all

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On the left is Olencarnock Victor 3rd, the Grand Champion Aberdeen-Angus Steer at the Brandon Winter Fair. This is a phenomenal steer that Mr. McGregor believes is as good as either of his two that won the Chicago International. On the right is Rosewood 2nd, the Yearling Shorthorn Bull by Amazing Hope. This calf sold for \$2,200 and is the highest priced home-bred bull ever sold in Western Canada. His breeder was Jas. B. Davidson, Myrtle, Man. The buyer was Colin McMillan, Winnipeg.

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