

Look Well to the Natural Increase in Flocks and Herds.

At this season of the year one expects to see, on entering the average farmyard or stable, young pigs, lambs, calves and colts idling their time away in the pen or else frolicking about in the sunny yard. It is the happiest season of the year for the man who loves live stock, and there are few who do not take delight in looking after the young things in the stable and assisting in giving them a good start in life. It is also an anxious time. A little carelessness in the attention to the pregnant females and to the young things after they are born may result in considerable loss. The good herdsman is always on the job; and may be found in or about the stable at almost any hour of the day or night during the spring-time. His presence saves many a young animal from an untimely death. A simple operation or a little assistance, by the man who knows how, can often save a lamb, pig, calf or colt. Some of the troubles common to our domesticated animals were practically unknown when the herds and flocks ran wild. The perfecting of our farm animals has, in some cases, tended to develop weakness. It is important that we copy nature as closely as possible in the care of the herds and flocks. At the present time the loss of a young animal means a good deal, owing to the enhanced value. Even under the best of care, the young or dam may be lost, but such should not be the result of neglect.

A good deal depends on how the dams are looked after during the gestation period. Some feed liberally and so pamper the animals that their constitutions are weakened; some go to the other extreme and are utterly neglectful of the animals under their care. It is important that a liberal ration be fed, so that the dams will be in a thrifty condition, but with the good feeding there should be moderate exercise. Towards the end of the gestation period the animals should be watched, and a clean, carefully disinfected box-stall provided for them.

THE COW AND HER CALF.

The practice of wintering the dry cow on straw is now about obsolete, farmers realizing the importance of having the dam in good condition at time of freshening. If there is a body reserve built up, the cow can feed her offspring more liberally than if the system is weak through lack of proper nourishment. Good silage, straw and a little hay will put flesh on most dry cows. It is advisable to grain some cows, the amount to feed depending upon the condition of the animal. As parturition draws near it is advisable to put the cow in a box-stall. She is more comfortable than if tied, and being free to rise and go to her offspring she invigorates it by her maternal care in licking. This sets the blood in circulation and dries the calf, so that there is less danger of it taking a chill. But, whether the cow is in a loose stall or not, it is a good practice for the attendant to keep close watch, as he may be able to render valuable assistance, thus lessening the suffering of the dam and possibly saving the life of the calf. During parturition, it is not wise to interfere except in the case of abnormal presentation. It is important that the animals be kept as quiet as possible, and if any operation is necessary it should be done by a skilled person. With normal presentation the fore feet appear first, with the nose between the knees. Assistance may be given by pulling outward and downward. Using a light block and tackle gives a steady pull, but care should be taken not to pull unduly hard as such practice has, on more than one occasion, broken the pelvic bones. The cow should not be allowed to labor too long without results before an examination is made. The foetus may be coming wrong, and the straining only weakens the dam. We recall one instance where there was little or no straining. The cow had evidently been sick when in the field, and the water bag had broken. Had an examination been made when she was brought to the stable the calf would undoubtedly have been saved. As it was, twenty-four hours elapsed before assistance was given and the calf was lost. The calf was lying on its back in the womb with the hind feet pressing against the kidneys, so that pain was caused each time the cow strained, thus the cause of little laboring. If the afterbirth does not come away in twenty-four hours it should be removed by an experienced person. Care must be taken not to injure the parts, as every abrasion makes a place for infection.

For the first day or two it is advisable to give warm water to drink, as cold water may cause a chill, and in this condition the cow is more susceptible to cold than at other times. Feeding a hot mash for several days is commendable, but this is not practiced as much now as it was at one time. After freshening it is a very good plan to give from a pound to a pound and a half of Epsom salts. If there are signs of constipation before the end of the gestation period, a mild purgative, as a quart of linseed oil, is recommended and laxative feed, such as plenty of roots and bran, may be given. Do not put the cow on a full ration, but start lightly and gradually increase until the cow reaches normal condition. In the case of heavy milkers, it is not wise to completely empty the udder for the first two or three milkings. When the calf is left with the cow there is seldom any trouble. Milk fever is more prevalent with the dairy breeds than with the beef breeds, owing to the heavy milking propensities.

It is important that the attendant see that the calf is able to get on its feet and obtain the colostrum, or first milk. This has a corrective effect on the system. The majority of calves are able to look after themselves, but one never knows when the calf will be weak and a little attention may save it. When a calf is to

be raised by the pail, it is a good plan to wean it at the end of the first day or two. For the first three or four weeks new milk should be given, the amount depending on the size of the calf. Four or five quarts a day is usually enough to start with, and this should be gradually increased. The change to skim-milk should also be made gradually. Over-feeding will soon result in indigestion and diarrhoea, and the symptoms of under-feeding are all too common to need any comment. Scours is a common disease in the calf herd, unless the utmost care is exercised. The stable should be kept clean and the pails used for feeding scalded regularly. Feed the milk at a uniform temperature, and let one person look after the calves. Feeding cool milk very often starts indigestion. Calf troubles are more easily prevented than cured once the calves are affected. The breeder of pure-breds, or grades either for that matter, cannot afford to gamble with his calf herd. The youngsters need more attention than the older animals, and failure to give the proper care and feed very often results in under-sized animals at maturity, which would otherwise have been considered of good quality. We need to save all the calves we can and to keep them in a thriving condition.

THE SPRING LITTER.

During the past winter hogs have not been as favorably thought of as they were a year ago, and some were rather dilatory about giving the young litters a chance. This spring the market has strengthened somewhat, and undoubtedly the spring litters will be worth saving. They can be carried through the summer at a reasonable cost, provided pasture crops are made use of, and will be ready for finishing when the new crop is threshed. It is very important that the brood sows have laxative feed and regular exercise previous to parturition. A good many of the vices to which sows become addicted after farrowing are preventable, if proper attention is given previous to and immediately after farrowing. The amount of grain to feed depends on the condition of the sow. Access to clover hay and plenty of mangels, with a very small quantity of grain, will carry the average sow along very nicely. They ought not to be too fat at farrowing time, but should be in good condition. Mineral matter, which may be supplied in the form of wood ashes, charcoal, bone meal, sulphur, salt, copperas, etc., should be fed. These may be mixed together and placed in a box to which the sow has access. A shed, or around the straw stack, is a good place for the brood sow to spend the winter. She will then receive the required exercise. When confined to the pen, there is a tendency for the sows to become over-fat and weak in the bone. In this condition there is considerable danger when moving them to the farrowing pen. The sudden violent exercise may cause them to stiffen, or injure them in some other way. It is also detrimental to the young.

The sow should be placed in the farrowing pen several days prior to parturition, as some are very restless when put in a strange pen. It is advisable to have a protecting rail against the wall. This should be eight inches from the floor and eight or ten inches out from the wall, to give the young pigs a chance to take refuge when the sow lies down. There is a difference of opinion as to the amount of straw to place in the pen. Some successful hog raisers advise using but a little chaff or cut straw, while others, equally successful, use an abundance of long straw. Their argument for this is that the sow will make a deep nest and there is no chance for the young pigs to wander about the pen and become chilled. The average sow is careful when lying down, but if one pig should be under her in a deep bed of straw it has a better chance of surviving than if there is but a little chaff on a board or cement floor.

When the sow is restless and cross the attendant should be on hand and place the young pigs in a basket or box. They may be kept warm by means of hot bricks. Pigs may be kept this way for ten or twelve hours and then, when the sow has quieted down, be placed with her. See that the sharp teeth are broken off so that they will not injure the dam.

For the first day or two warm slop is all the feed necessary, and then the ration should be gradually increased until the full feed is reached by the end of two weeks' time. Here again the amount to feed depends upon the size and condition of the sow. Some milk more liberally than others, and if the young pigs do not get exercise they may become affected by that serious ailment known as thumps. If the young pigs are becoming over-fat, force both them and the sow to take exercise. It is not unusual for vermin to bother the young pigs. By applying oil to the brood sow these pests may be destroyed. A dry, clean pen, on the sunny side of the barn, is an ideal place for the young litter, and if the weather is favorable it is a good plan to give them the freedom of the yard for an hour or two at mid-day. At three weeks of age pigs which are a little under-fed will commence drinking milk from a trough. If success is to be obtained, it is a good plan to give the young pigs a trough by themselves.

INCREASES IN THE FLOCK.

Many of the principles regarding the care of the cow and sow also apply to the ewe. In some flocks there is a heavy mortality each spring, due very often to improper care of the flock during the winter and to failure of the attendant to be on hand at lambing time. The past year or two have been banner ones for the sheepmen, from the standpoint of the price of mutton and wool. To save a lamb is a good day's pay. One cause

of considerable mortality is narrow doorways in the sheep pen. The ewes become injured when crowding in or out of the pen, or if there is undue crowding at the feed trough. This very often results in still-born lambs. It is doubtful if there are any better feeds than oats, bran, peas, roots and leguminous hay. The amount to feed depends upon the condition of the flock. If the ewes have plenty of exercise during the gestation period there will be a good deal less trouble at parturition than if they have been closely confined. As soon as the lamb is born the mucous should be removed from its mouth and nostrils, and the weak lambs assisted in getting their first meal. It very often happens that their legs are too weak for them to stand alone, and they must be held. Then, too, some ewes do not take kindly to their offspring, and it is necessary to keep close watch for several days to see that the lamb gets sufficient nourishment. Dipping a chilled or weak lamb in real warm water and then wiping it dry will very often revive it. It is a good practice to make several small pens in the sheep barn by means of hurdles. A pen six feet square is large enough for one ewe. Symptoms of parturition are swelling of the organs, uneasiness, desire for separation from the flock, and bleating.

As the lambs develop they require more nourishment than what they receive from the dam. They have no chance at the trough along with the ewe, consequently it is advisable to provide a pen where the lambs may have access to a trough of their own and there pick at oats, bran, oil cake, etc. Some men seem to have a great deal more success with their flocks than others, due possibly to a natural instinct for looking after the ewes and their progeny. Not a lamb should be lost this spring through neglect. Canada requires more sheep.

THE MARE AND HER FOAL.

As a rule, more attention is paid to the young colt than to the other classes of young stock on the farm, due possibly to the higher value of the horse, although at the present time a cow is a close rival from this standpoint. As with all pregnant animals, the mare requires steady and regular exercise, with a liberal supply of wholesome feed. Work does not hurt her, provided the ground is not slippery, the draw is steady, and there is no sudden backing. Using her on the wagon over rough roads is not a practice to be condoned. The mare may take her place in the team during seeding time. Care should be taken, however, that she does not become exhausted or over-heated. Clover hay, oats and bran, with a few roots every day, make a good ration, as they are nourishing and have a laxative effect. The mare in a good, strong, thrifty condition is better able to stand the strain of parturition than the fat, unexercised mare. The shrinking of the muscles and parts back of the hips may be noticed a week previous to foaling. Four or five days before the foal arrives the teats become filled, and when war forus on the ends, parturition will not be long delayed. Seldom is assistance necessary, but the attendant needs to be on hand so as to look after the colt after it is born.

If the colt is to be born in the stable it is important that the stall be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. It is a good plan to sprinkle lime on the floor. As a rule, the greatest success is obtained when the mare is on pasture. The fresh grass has a beneficial effect on the system, and there is less danger of disease in the foal that is born in the field than in the one born in the stable. As with other young stock, they very often require attention in order to assist them to take nourishment. Very often, too, the young colt is crooked-legged and wobbly, but it is surprising how quickly the most of them straighten up, and when a few days old are able to scamper around quite lively. If the mare is cross the weak colt needs attention. It is sometimes necessary to tie and hobble the mare to get her to allow the colt to suck. Constipation frequently occurs in young colts, and if not attended to will soon result in weakness. Some give a tablespoonful of castor oil and an injection of warm water; others have found that feeding unsalted butter is an excellent corrective for the trouble. If the meconium is not expelled after injections, it should be removed.

Joint-ill or navel-ill is a disease which proves fatal with many foals. Preventive measures should be taken. When cutting the cord, use a clean instrument, and tie with a string that has been disinfected. Apply tincture of iodine and dress it four or five times daily with a strong disinfectant until it is dried. Any of the coal-tar products may be used for disinfecting, and may be used up to a ten-per-cent. solution.

The mare should be given warm drinks and a mash for the first day or two. If seasonable, there is no place to equal the pasture for the mare and colt. In justice to the mare she should have two or three weeks' rest before being put in the collar again, and even then she should not be given a full day's work. Leave the colt in a box stall so arranged that it cannot injure itself. Do not allow it to suck when the mare is very warm from working in the field. Permitting the colt to follow the mare at work is too tiring for it.

It sometimes happens that the colt is left an orphan. It may be reared on cow's milk, but it is necessary to modify this slightly. A tablespoonful of sugar may be dissolved in warm water, three or four tablespoonfuls of linewater added, with enough milk from a fresh cow to make a pint. It is necessary to feed this mixture every hour or two at first, and a quarter of a pint is about all that will be taken at a time. Later the feeds