

# Farmer's Advocate

## and Home Journal

REGISTERED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COPYRIGHT ACT OF 1875.

April 17, 1907.

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA.

Vol. XLII. No. 760

### EDITORIAL

#### Provincial Stock Sales.

One of the chief points of discussion at the recent meetings of the Alberta Stock Breeders, as our readers will have noticed, was over the intimation that the Dominion Government grant of \$650 would not be forthcoming if the restrictions upon the showing and sale of stock from outside the province were maintained by the Cattle and Horse Breeders Associations. Like other such matters there are two sides to the question. The Dominion authorities quite justly lay down the principle that they cannot in fairness to all parts of the Dominion grant money for the exclusive benefit of the breeders of any one province unless an opportunity is given to breeders in all other provinces to avail themselves of the opportunity to sell. On the other hand the Alberta breeders show that such restrictions as they have imposed are necessary to make a sale to which the Dominion Government contributes, not only a success, but at all feasible. Experience has demonstrated to the Alberta breeders that if their sale is open to breeders of cattle from all over Canada the place of the sale will be so crowded with bulls that the market will be glutted and prices will not only be lowered, but an immense expense will be incurred in taking stock back home. Both sides are right as far as they go and if it is necessary that such a sale be assisted by a Government grant, that assistance will have to come from the Government of the province in which the sale is held.

It is just a question, however, how much value a purely provincial sale is to the breeders and how long it can be maintained. Association sales of this kind are successfully held in many parts of the Old Country, but their success depends altogether upon the extent of the demand from outside of the home breeders. Similarly it would appear that the Western provincial sales are very largely dependent upon the demand for bulls from the Indian Department. No one knows better than the officials who have the work of conducting these sales the difficulties in the way of making them satisfactory. The first difficulty was the offering of very inferior animals which no one wanted at any price, but which the association was at the expense of offering for sale. The fixing of a minimum price of \$50 had the effect of raising much higher the general excellence of the offerings. Then came the bugbear of over supply which had a most depressing effect upon prices in 1905, was entirely absent in 1906, but which reappeared again this year. From all appearances, therefore, the Alberta cattle breeders will now have to put some restrictions upon themselves, either through their executives or at their individual choice. And here again a broad policy must be pursued. In some parts of Canada where it was found necessary to impose such restrictions only the very inferior cattle which found no buyers at home turned up at the sales and soon these association vendors got the reputation of being the scrap heaps of the breeders. In the West this unfortunate condition could be prevented if every breeder adapted the sensible policy of competing with others for the securing of the highest average of the sale. This would insure good stock being brought out, would increase the value and reputation of the stock

at the sales and would make it easier to dispose of the more inferior stuff which might be left at home. There is no room for a short sighted, selfish policy in connection with the successful conduct of provincial sales.

#### Extending the Stock Raising Industry.

Alberta ranchers have come through one of the most severe winters with which the stock raisers in that province have had to contend, and the experience will have a pronounced effect upon their policy. Ranchers have been classified as old-timers and moderns according to their method of handling their stock. The policy of the former has been to rent land from the Government or the C. P. R. and to run their stock on the open range summer and winter without regard to weather conditions and seldom if ever feeding hay, even to the youngest and weakest stock. These ranchers have seen the day approaching when they would either have to buy their own range or give up raising stock, and the last course has appealed to many. Upon these the severe winter has had the effect of hurrying to a conclusion these operations, as some of them have been heavy losers and they will not stock up again with the uncertainty of the length of time their leases will be continued.

The other class of ranchers, whether or not they have purchased their ranges, have practised putting up hay in the summer and feeding whatever stock required it. With these men losses have run from nil to fifteen per cent. according to the amount of shelter their stock has been able to get. Where such men own their own ranges stock raising will continue with them a staple industry, and with those who have rented their range but who take good care of their stock, ranching will continue for some time to be their chosen profession, and albeit a profitable one.

The general trend of the ranching business in Alberta is to become modernized. Each year more men buy range and put up feed, but this is but the beginning of the improvement that is in process of taking place. It is being demonstrated on every hand that it is practicable to raise stock on land that has risen in value from a mere nominal rental of a fraction of a cent to ten dollars per acre. Oats and barley are being grown now where a few years ago it was thought the land and climate were adverse to the production of grain. And this is but an intimation of the change that is coming. Alfalfa will follow the grain crops and will thrive on the rolling land that is not best suited for oats and barley. Alfalfa will be the crop that will make it possible for Alberta to triple and quadruple her stock products and will make stock raising on land valued at thirty dollars an acre a profitable industry.

The introduction of crop growing in connection with ranching of course necessitates such a change in system that the new ranching will scarcely be recognized as an evolution from the old. It implies a system of farming with artificial protection for stock, though this protection need not be and will not be anything more than a wind-break. Already sufficient is known of stock raising in the West to convince ranchers that there is no need for elaborate stables, that in fact these are an expensive evil.

Nor will the evolution in ranching be confined to a change in care and treatment of stock and the making of a different use of the land, but with these stockraisers will be able to mature their cattle earlier and to develop in them a more domesticated spirit. The stock raising industry in Canada is certain to follow the same course as it has in the United States. There the Western States raise cattle for the Central and Eastern States to fatten and finish. In Canada nearly fifty per cent. of the cattle exported go forward direct from the ranges without any hay or grain feeding to finish them, while in the States only

about eight per cent. of the cattle are so handled. This is not due to any difference in the class of cattle kept, for according to a Chicago stock yards official who has been looking over the range cattle of Alberta the past few weeks, they are of somewhat similar type though of better quality than the cattle raised under identical conditions across the line.

The live stock industry is a national one and while the rancher is responsible for much of the business, still the farmers of Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario should maintain an interest in it, for in the nature of things the finishing of Western steers on the farms of these provinces will come to be a profitable industry and a necessary adjunct to grain growing. On a small scale such a course is being pursued by a few farmers about Newdale on the M. and N. W. branch, and judging by the success they are attaining the practice is bound to extend.

#### Fewer and More Accurate Crop Reports Desirable.

Three or four times a year crop bulletins come to the editorial tables, purporting to contain reliable information as to the number of acres placed under the different crops, and also in one case some reference was made to the production increase or decrease as the case may be, of dairy production, both from creamery and farm. Later in the season reports appear in which the condition of the crop is referred to, the acreage being summerfallowed or being broken out of sod, and mention is made of the probable yield. Still later appears a report of how the crops have yielded as far as can be arrived at by crop correspondents.

In the first place we do not believe, neither do we think it will be claimed that these reports are reasonably accurate. The remuneration a crop reporter or correspondent gets is not sufficient to encourage the compilation of figures of value. The only possible or probable value the earlier reports can have is for the grain speculator, either to bull or bear the grain market as the case may be. Under present conditions the crop correspondents cannot afford to give the time necessary to accurate compilation, and in many cases the figures sent in are mere guesses. This assertion has been made by crop correspondents, men anxious to give accurate information, but who cannot do so while the regulations as existing continue. Further, these reports cost money to print and take time of clerks to arrange for the printer. We would suggest that one report a year would be ample, taken just before harvest; the figures arrived at would later on be verified or disproved by the threshers reports and thus changes could be made to improve the system followed. With only one report the various departments of agriculture would save in printing and clerk hire enough to warrant the payment of each crop correspondent the modest sum of five or ten dollars and then insist on care being taken to ensure accurate reports. With very few precautions taken to ensure accuracy the whole crop report fabric is worth nothing and is just so much time and paper wasted. The *Free Press* of Winnipeg furnishes an argument in favor of our contention. The crop report of that paper is the most accurate, taken year in year out, of any issued, and we submit that the time is opportune to amend the system now in force by the provincial Governments. One report in which the figures are carefully collected and compiled is of more value than the two or three as now issued. Further, the crop reporters should be paid a sum at least enough to encourage the attempt to get reliable statistics. There has been in the past the tendency of Governments to attempt to get service from the rural public for little or nothing—witness the remuneration given to crop correspondents and rural postmasters.