

Western Horse Industry

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So why shouldn't the West make as good a name for itself raising horses notable for constitution, quality and dense flinty bone, as has been won already by the raising of hard, high grade, red wheat!

If "well begun is half done" is true, then the man who has decided what breed of horses he will raise and has secured suitable foundation stock of that breed is well on the road to the enjoyment of some of the pleasures and profits of horse raising. The third step is to mate the mares comprising the stud to as good a stallion of the breed as can be met with or heard of. The fourth step is to feed and care for the mare well after service and up to foaling time as well as while the foal is nursing, this is a point often overlooked by good horsemen who observe all the others, yet it is one that largely governs the size, temperament and constitution of the colt. The fifth step comprises the care, feed, management and training of the colt, while the sixth is that point where we farmers so often fall down, namely, in the marketing of our product.

Uniformity In Dams

For the purposes of this article we shall assume that the farmer who is now devoting, or who intends giving, some attention to horse raising as a branch of his farm work will confine his attention to heavy horses. It takes more capital and perhaps more special training and care to handle the breeding of light horses satisfactorily. We must keep a number of fairly heavy horses for the working of our farms and we usually breed what mares we have to such horses as may be available, in any case. Thus the material for a start in horse breeding is all ready to our hand and all that is required at the outset is that we decide upon what breed we will build up along the lines of, and then see that, if our present mares are not similar in type and do not approximate to the standards of the breed determined upon, we sell or trade until we have a group of mares that will be likely, when bred to the same horse, to throw stock having similar general characteristics. If we only start with two mares, let us have uniformity; uniformity of excellence if possible, but uniformity. The whole work of improvement and grading up is then simplified for it can be done by the use of one stallion.

Perhaps an illustration will make this point clearer. The man who does not realize the necessity for uniformity acquires two fairly good mares; neither is perfect of course, and consequently has some weak points. The one is a trifle over-refined, lacks in substance and tone, but has a splendid set of hocks, pasterns and feet. The other is a strong-middled, short-coupled, deep-chested mare, but a trifle coarse at the ground and meaty around the hocks. The owner recognizes that his mares are not perfect and desires to effect an improvement in the colts. What kind of a stallion shall he seek for? In no case can he hope to find an animal strong in all or even half the points where one or other of the two mares is lacking. He can hardly avoid over-emphasizing the good qualities of the one while counteracting the weaknesses of the other. To insure both mares throwing stock better than themselves he would have to find and use two stallions. If he does not do so the results of his breeding operations are likely to be disappointing and discouraging.

On the other hand the man with two mares, both of which incline to fineness, light tone and quality at the expense of substance, has a simpler task. Having found a stallion of similar general type but with substance, masculinity, scale and good tone, the breeder could rest reasonably satisfied that his crop of colts would be an improvement upon their mothers. As time went on more and more uniformity would be evident in this man's stud, while the other man, unless he selected a stallion for each individual animal, would soon not know where he was at.

The point has but to be stated in this way to make its truth and importance clear. Moreover, it should be remembered by the man who is breeding to sell, that a matched team of three-year-olds will bring much more money than will two unmated individuals of the same excellence. The buyer is saved the time, expense and uncertainty of looking for a mate for his purchase. Matched teams cannot be raised from dissimilar dams, so be sure your breeding mares are of similar type and conformation before entering upon the horse raising industry with a serious purpose in view.

Choice of Breeds

The question of what breed to work with and towards is an important one that must be settled right at the beginning. In this respect the amateur breeder and raiser of horses for market purposes is fortunately placed these days, for in this country he can choose any of three or even four heavy draught breeds and make no mistake. In the order of their present popularity in the West the heavy draught breeds are Clydesdales, Percherons, Shires and Belgians. We also have some good representatives of the Suffolk Punch breed in this country. The popularity of Clydesdales is due to the presence of so many Ontario people and Scotchmen in the West. Scotland is the home of the breed and the great source of supplies, and just to the extent that Ontario was settled with Scotch was the breed introduced there.

We should not like to say that Clydesdales are losing favor in the West, any more than that we are less Canadian than we were ten years ago, but the steadily increasing favor in which Percherons are held must be explained. We believe that there are two causes for it. One is that the Percherons preponderate over other draught breeds in the United States, and it is but natural that our settlers from that

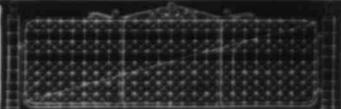
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