

THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE & HOME MAGAZINE

THE LEADING AGRICULTURAL JOURNAL IN
THE DOMINION.PUBLISHED BY
THE WILLIAM WELD COMPANY (LIMITED).
LONDON, ONT., and WINNIPEG, MAN.

JOHN WELD, Manager.

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Good Roads.

From time to time the FARMER'S ADVOCATE has devoted a good deal of space to the subject of road improvement, which we are pleased to note will be very generally discussed at the gatherings of farmers this winter. In many localities much has been accomplished, but still more remains to be done. Too many fail to realize how bad the roads really are that they are compelled to travel over, usage having "hardened them to it," or from not having, in contrast, had the pleasure of travelling over really good ones. With regard to the good roads campaign, we believe it will be found that educational work will, in the end, be found more beneficial than any attempt at sweeping or radical changes in the road law. Good drainage, proper grading, the use of levellers, road machines, and proper gravel and the making of repairs wherever actually needed, are among the essentials in securing good roads. These things presuppose intelligent supervision, and as the road question is studied, practical men in every farming community will naturally come to the front and push on the work of improvement. Winter is the time to consider the subject, mature plans, and in many cases procure the supplies of gravel needed.

Principles to be Observed in Establishing a Flock or Herd.

[Paper read by Hon. John Dryden before a joint meeting of the Dominion Sheep and Swine Breeders' Associations, at Guelph.]

In order to accomplish the best results in any pursuit of life, it is necessary to have a clear conception of what is desired. A builder would make poor headway, and be likely to produce an uncouth building, without a definite plan, either defined on paper or clearly present in his own mind. The sculptor, before using his chisel on the rough marble, must have some ideal in his mind towards which he directs his efforts. The painter could never produce an effective picture by using his brush at random. The farmer, before he sows the seed, must have decided what his crop is to be. So, also, the first and most important principle in establishing a herd or flock will be to decide definitely what you wish to accomplish. The breeder can no more attain success by chance than the builder or sculptor. Did Bates or Booth or Webb or Cruickshank or any other of the old breeders reach their position by a haphazard system of management? Not at all. Study their lives and you will find that in every case they proceeded on a definitely defined plan. They decided what particular type of animal it was desirable to produce, and, with this ideal clearly set, they year by year pursued their work, with what result all the world now knows.

I want especially to emphasize this point, because I claim that no permanent success can be realized unless the breeder is impressed with its importance. Why is it that you see on entering many of our dairy stables so many types—all sizes and all shapes are represented? The reason is that the proprietor or agent who gathers the animals together has selected them without having any definite type fixed in his mind. One often wonders in looking at a flock of sheep why there is so little uniformity. The reason is clearly that the owner has no ideal, and may be unable to tell one from another without looking at the tag in the ear.

I well remember the herd of cows on my father's farm when it was passed over to my control. They were of all ages, all sizes and all colors: some of them red, some black, some blue, some white and some brindled, and others with a combination of all these. Some of them had long horns and some short, and some none at all; some were turned down and others turned back. They had been gathered together without any other idea than that they were able to produce a calf and furnish a supply of milk. It is not necessary in order to have a cow give milk that she should be ugly to look at. I remember a very old cow that used to be kept at the College Farm; I objected to her appearance, and the authorities there found fault with me because they claimed she was an extra good milker. My point is that it is just as easy, and certainly more desirable, to have the herd consist of animals of a reasonable appearance, which will furnish just as large a quantity of milk, as to have it composed of animals that are simply shocking to look at.

The best large milking herd I ever saw in this country was that owned at one time by Mr. D. D. Wilson, of Seaford, who furnished the town with milk from his herd. They were nearly all grade cattle, but were evidently selected by some one who had a definite idea of what he wished to purchase. They were nearly all of the same size, and all had more or less the same outline—they were wedge-shaped, rather narrow in front and wider behind. All had similar shaped udders, and they were a delight to the eye and filled the pail as well.

One of my neighbor farmers, who was a Scotchman and reared in Ayrshire, Scotland, claimed, twenty years ago, that it should not be necessary to send abroad for a good family of milking cattle; that among what were called Canadian cows in our country at that time could be found the very best type of a milk cow that could be desired. This man knew the form he wished, and always had animals of that description in his yard, and he claimed that if some man would take it up and establish a breed on that foundation, it would be as useful as any of the dairy breeds we now have.

The young beginner should first decide what particular breed is best suited to his circumstances, but it is not enough for him to select the breed, nor is it enough for him to determine that these should be registered in some herd or flock book. There is often nearly as much distinction between individual specimens of the same breed as there is between average types of different breeds. He who is to be a successful breeder should have in his own mind the particular form as well as the particular breed he desires to produce. If this be understood, he will naturally, when selecting foundation stock, secure that which is nearest the ideal. Doubtless it will be impossible for him absolutely to reach it. We have not yet been able to find perfection in any of these animals. His skill will therefore be seen in his ability to build up and perpetuate the good, and at the same time eliminate, as far as possible, whatever imperfection his keen eye may discern.

There are some qualities common to all animals that must not be unnoticed by the beginner. Good health, robust constitution, with the ability to produce beef, milk, mutton, wool or pork, as may be the design, at the lowest cost, should be requisites in every case. A weakly, puny cow, pig or sheep is just as likely to bring his owner success as that a race of warriors should spring from puny, consump-

tive parents. These weaklings ought to be weeded from any herd or flock; much less should they be chosen as foundation stock by any beginner. I am a strong believer in judicious selection in order to increase superior production. It is true in vegetable and plant life, and is just as true, and more easily discerned, in the animal world.

Fortunately, in our day we have the advantage of the wisdom and experience of skilful breeders of the past, who, working with a definite object, have produced breeds of animals particularly adapted for certain specific purposes. Breeds of cattle have been developed with special beef qualities, and others with special milk characteristics, and some there are that claim a combination of both. There are breeds of sheep that are kept solely for the fine texture of the wool they produce; others are kept principally for the extra quality of the mutton, while the wool is considered of minor importance. We have also breeds of swine which, judging from their appearances, would never produce anything but lean meat, while others at an early age give indications of an extra quantity of lard. With these various characteristics developed in the different breeds, it is clear that the young beginner must decide what he specially desires to produce. If his design be to produce milk, then it is idle for him to invest his money in certain of the beef breeds. He will find already produced at his hand animals with special characteristics in the direction he seeks. On the other hand, if he determines that beef is his main staple—that his design is to produce cattle whose chief characteristic shall be the production of prime beef—he would be very silly to choose the Jersey breed for that purpose. He will find at his hand animals that have been bred for generations to a type that will give him the greatest returns in that direction in the least time. At the same time there is no doubt that all these breeds may be changed somewhat; that is to say, the milking qualities of a beef breed may be encouraged and developed, while the beefing properties of really a milking breed may also be turned in the same direction by judicious selection and breeding; but it is a great mistake for the beginner to think there is no difference. There is a vast difference, and he must, before he makes his selection, be prepared to acknowledge and act upon it.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

In founding a herd or flock the females should be selected as near the ideal as possible. I should want to do this first. Having selected the females, then you are better prepared to select a male animal that will be calculated to fix the ideal type or to correct imperfections that may be observed in the herd.

While my judgment would be to give little prominence to pedigree without an animal to match, yet a selection, especially of cattle, will not be complete without some regard being given to breeding. Every man of any experience knows that in the coldest blood to be found among our cattle, you will sometimes discover an animal of very superior qualities. If this animal be selected for foundation stock, the chances are that the result will be most disappointing. If, on examining the breeding, it is seen that the animal belongs to a family of animals bearing that type, you will have greater certainty that the produce will be such as is desired. Let no young beginner, however, feel that he has an absolute certainty in this regard. No matter how careful the selection, it will sometimes happen, for what reason I am unable to tell, that the produce does not show that accuracy of form and type that the owner was warranted in expecting. Such animals should always be discarded as breeders and sent to the butcher at the earliest opportunity, and only those retained that come the closest to the ideal set before the breeder. As years go by, if the skill of the breeder is sufficient, the herd will improve in uniformity and conform more closely to the design he has in mind. On the other hand, it is a very easy thing, after you have selected a choice herd of females, to destroy the type altogether by the use, for a few years, of an improper sire. This is especially the case with sheep and swine, because the animals will need to be replaced by young ones within a few years. It is sometimes said that the male animal is half the herd; in some cases the breeder proves he is more than half, because if he be an improper sire he will destroy the type altogether. It is, therefore, true that the young beginner and the old breeder as well will always find the greatest difficulty in the selection of a suitable male animal. If the animals that comprise the herd are seen to have any specially weak point, the selection of the male should not be such as to perpetuate it, because when it is once set it becomes a characteristic of the herd, and it is extremely difficult to breed it out. He should, therefore, be selected, bearing in mind the characteristics of the individual animals comprising the herd. This principle, if acted upon, means that an animal that might be useful to one breeder would not necessarily meet the requirements of another. I should be delighted if the day would ever come in this country when the man who goes to purchase would go having his own individual ideas of what he wants for himself, and be prepared to act upon them without regard whatever to the opinions of others. Who has not seen men refuse to bid at an auction sale because their neighbor was not doing so; or who, on the other hand, has not seen a man bidding on an animal simply because he saw a prominent breeder doing the same? It might be wise for the prominent breeder to bid, but very unwise for the man