

The Draft Horse and its Future

An Article Dealing with Type

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The horse raising industry in Western Canada dates back to the commencement of its agriculture, using that term in its widest sense. Our draft horse—similar to other lines of live stock undergoing methods of improvement—varies more or less in type. This is only what one may reasonably expect in a comparatively new country, settled by people who, in many instances, got their first experience with horses on our prairie farms. In spite of these temporary disadvantages, the improvement which can be noticed in our show ring types in 1914 over those of former years is almost phenomenal.

When we realize how favorable our conditions—soil and climate—are for the production of draft horses of the finest type, the question presents itself as to the cause for so many undersized specimens appearing each season at our country fairs. Another problem which confronts the horse breeder at the present time is the stagnancy which has befallen our horse market. No doubt many diverse reasons can be cited to account for the present depression. Some maintain that horses had heretofore been a little above their value for farm work. Grain production is hardly profitable enough to warrant investing six to seven hundred dollars in a team of geldings which would barely merit the title of draft horses. Another reason accountable for the fall in prices is the too frequent introduction of a tractor into our tillage force. Demand and supply have also been responsible. We have now reached that stage where we produce a horse power equal to our immediate need. And it is in an endeavor to outline the type of horse most suitable to fulfil this need that these remarks are penned.

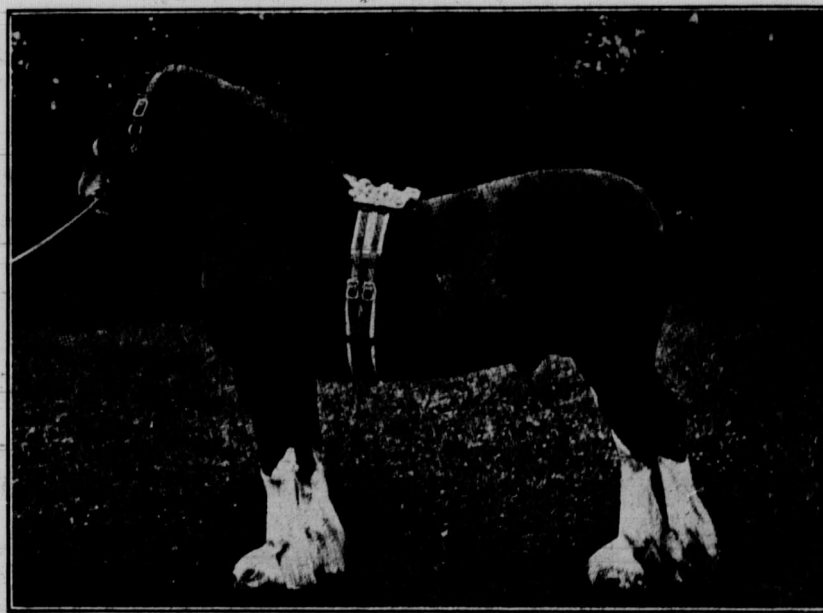
Every business man endeavors to "size up" the future of his calling, i.e., he recognizes the law of "demand and supply" as a basic factor in the commercial world. This same law holds good in our farm operations, altho we too often ignore it to our subsequent sorrow. A word, then, would not be out of place as to the future of our draft horse. The system of exclusive grain growing on a large scale is gradually but permanently being replaced by a method of crop rotation. This has been the history of farming in every country and it is not likely that ours will prove to be the exception. This will demand better and more thorough systems of soil tillage, distribute labor more evenly over the months of the year, and will in time demand more horse power per acre taking our country as a whole. In addition to the forementioned changes, it will make the tractor a too expensive implement and one not so economically operated on our smaller areas than under cultivation. A rotation suitable to our needs will produce forage crops, and hence supply fuel for our horses and lessen the cost of production. We should grow on our farm sufficient variety of "stock and crop" to at least supply our working needs. The dawn of this development in our methods of farming points to a great demand for draft horses, and it is the choicest type that find the readiest sale.

The Four Types

Horses are classified according to the work they have to perform. Many of our agricultural exhibitions have in the past offered awards for four types of horses, each type being capable of doing farm work, these being classified as the draft, agricultural, farm chunk, and general purpose horse. A great deal of controversy has taken place as to the advisability of doing this. Some maintain that it is wrong to encourage the farm chunk and general purpose horses. However true that statement may be, we must recognize that there are certain requirements which are a common necessity in every horse regardless of type and, further, if we believe the agricul-

tural exhibition to be first and foremost an educational institution, surely its first function along this line is to pass judgment upon the class of horse already found in the district. Show our new settlers what are the requirements of a choice horse. This being done, it is only a matter of time before the better types will replace the inferior ones. A good article once introduced should hold its place on merit and merit alone. No amount of press work will convince the practical man against his will. "Seeing is believing." And a good horse is

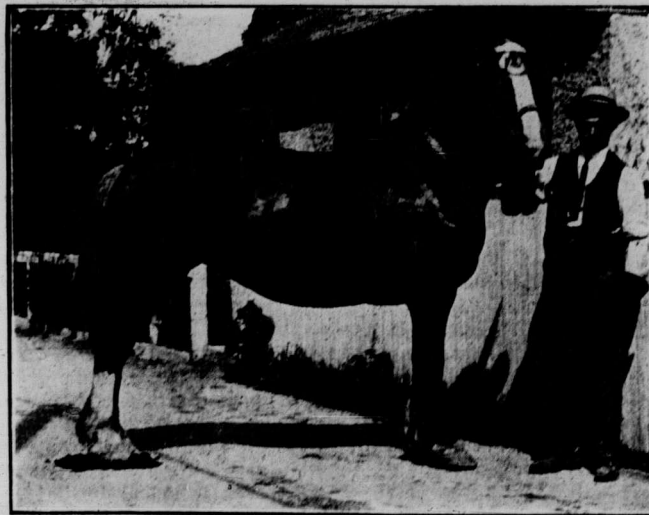
An ideal conformation in a draft horse calls for an animal which in general appearance possesses a wide, deep, massive, black form, set squarely on four fairly short limbs—squareness being viewed from front, side and rear. Going more into detail, we want a clean head, medium length from eye to nostril, and free from flesh, large nostrils and strong jaws, with neat lips—an ill-formed mouth with coarse, loosely muscled lips give an old appearance, distasteful to the eye—good width between eyes, forehead full and well developed,



THE DRAFT TYPE

worthy of recognition altho the same animal may not qualify perfectly for any of our more modern classifications. In view of these facts, our smaller agricultural fairs cannot adopt a cast iron rule and admit horses only that exactly qualified in weight alone, altho it is a grave mistake to imagine that a small draft horse is representative of our agricultural class. Let us first of all, then, in our new districts encourage the breeding of good, choice horses, then gradually the horses in the district, by the use

with ears set wide apart but standing erect and not too long. Plenty of width in the jaw so that when the horse is reined in tightly this width allows free breathing which is obviously very imperative. Neck nicely crested, well muscled and of fair length. Neck attached to a nice sloping shoulder. As a rule when an animal has straight, upright shoulders it lacks a "cresty" appearance and accompanies straight, short pasterns which go parallel to the shoulder. Note collar seat. Avoid thick,



A Good Type of Farm Chunk

of choice draft sires, will improve in size, substance and quality. The requirements of a choice horse are as follows: Symmetry in conformation, type, constitution, soundness. In addition to these four requirements there must be quality, carriage, action, age, color and sex. All these are important considerations, yet are more elastic in degree of requirement according to the type of horse judged.

coarse shoulder which requires half sweeney collars to prevent sore shoulders. This is where the animal encounters its load. Another faulty conformation accompanying these defects is short withers and long back. Back short with well-sprung ribs; loin broad and well muscled—this is the animal's bridge, speaking figuratively, and a weak loin is a serious defect. Long, wide quarters with croup fairly level, well

muscled stifle and full in the britching. Viewing the animal from the side, note depth of rib and hind flank. Occasionally an animal is criticized for being leggy when the fault rests with lack of depth in body, in other words, short rib. Short coupling, breast full and deep, with plenty of width in the floor of the chest. Forearm and gaskin well muscled. This is a good indication of the amount of muscle found elsewhere on the animal, which is occasionally puffed out with heavy feeding. Muscle is needed to stand work. Knees and hocks strong and wide, free from any trace of coarseness. Many of our most popular breeds of draft horses suffer from coarse hocks, and we can locate a large percentage of our common unsoundness in the hock joint, viz., bone spavin, bog spavin or blood spavin and occult spavin, thoro pin, capped hock, puffs and curbs are all commonly found in Western Canada today, yet our roads are not nearly as hilly as some roads found where our best draft horses come from as a rule. Note width of cannon directly below knee and hock and avoid any trace of meatiness. Cannons should not be too long. Pasterns are a source of constant trouble in our draft horse, but great improvement has taken place in some of the breeds. The pastern should be of medium length and sufficiently sloping to give the animal a nice springy stride, this lessens any concussion in the joints. Particularly is this true of the foot and shoulder. The saying that "no foot, no horse" is very true. An ideal foot is large, round and deep, made of tough black horn. White horn, as a rule, is not quite so durable. Heels should be wide apart to receive weight evenly and to allow of a free and healthy development of frog. Narrow, contracted feet are often due to faulty shoeing. The pastern, as a consequence, lacks adequate support and unsoundness appears, such, for example, as side bone.

Draft Type

Having roughly outlined the requirements of a draft horse, let us now consider what type means. We often hear the remark made, "He is a good type of man for that office." From this we take it to mean that he possesses characteristics suited to the particular needs of that office. Just precisely the same with our farm horses. Type may be defined as the particular conformation in a horse which will best enable that animal to perform its particular work with the greatest amount of ease and comfort, i.e., a horse that will do the greatest amount of heavy work in a given time upon a suitable ration and last the longest. That is my idea of a good draft horse. A strong constitution is an asset of the greatest worth in any animal. Many of our farm horses possess to a fairly commendable degree the many requirements of the choice horse, but if they lack constitution it may be taken for granted that they will not stand heavy work. They are like an over-rated engine which will run nicely when on a light load, but falls down when put to heavy work. Horses of this kind will keep in fairly good condition when doing light work, but when the six months' work must produce sufficient revenue to compensate for twelve months' keep they fall down. Our present system of heavy feeding with cereals for six months of the year and idleness for another six months must needs tax an animal's constitution to the utmost. While we possibly should not over-emphasize one point in discussing an animal, since all are a part of the whole, perhaps the writer will be pardoned for saying that he looks for constitution in an animal as carefully as the medical man does in a human being before recommending him for life insurance. Chest measurement and heart girth, with large nostrils, strong clean jaws, nice mild eye, and a well ribbed up body are all signs of good constitution.

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