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EDITORIAL.

The "June Conditions" Fad

Like all the other classes, we farmers are open to the charge of being subject to the sway of hobbies. Some one thinks out a good idea, tries it a little while perhaps, and begins preaching it. The preaching, whether it persuades anyone else or not, confirms his own faith in the notion, and what he started out by suggesting he is soon harping upon with all his might. If the idea has a certain degree of merit, and its author is in a public position where he can advertise it effectively, it may possibly gain headway, be taken up by other teachers, and heralded and proclaimed with three times the emphasis it deserves. Often these ideas do much good. The exaggerated importance attached to them is not unmixed evil. Frequently it arrests the attention of men who might otherwise continue in the old grooves. It seems the world has not yet reached a stage where it can make smooth advance up the inclined plane of progress. People drift into ruts, and have to be jolted out of them. We usually make our advances pendulum-fashion, swinging first to one extreme then to the other, and finally getting our poise after much swinging and buffeting. The sooner we reach the judicious equilibrium, however, the better it is for us.

One of the fads on which quite a few Ontario dairymen have struck the extreme, and are now ready for more rational practice, is the notion that we should try to keep our cattle all the year round under conditions as nearly as possible approaching those which obtain in early summer pastures. "June conditions" is the enticing expression in which this idea was epitomized. First promulgated among us by a few platform apostles of winter dairying and advanced agriculture, it has been trumpeted back and forth over the Province till reiteration has had its effect, and quite an expense has been incurred in some cases in the attempt to feed and house stock more or less in accord with the June-conditions idea. It is plausible, but experience and observation have led us, after all, to modify our opinions, although still convinced that the agitation has done much good in getting away from the old straw-stack regime.

By "June conditions" was implied warmth, fresh air, succulent food, quietness, and ability to satisfy thirst at will with water of medium temperature. Feeding cattle twice a day was held to be as good as feeding oftener, for the cow really eats when she chews her cud, and twice-a-day feeding will keep her paunch well enough filled that she may ruminate at will. It was argued that as cattle did better on June pasture than under any other system of feeding or housing, therefore, could we continue such ideal conditions throughout the twelvemonth, we might look for the best possible results from our animals. To this end, stables were made as warm and light as possible, water was provided in basins before the cattle, which were fed in winter on a mixture of cut clover hay, corn silage and pulped roots, all prepared twelve or more hours ahead in layers and left to heat mildly in a feed room. We have heard men diatribe upon the fragrant, appetizing mess till one fairly pitied his own cows which had never known better fare than whole hay, sliced roots and meal.

But there is another side to it, as those who followed such advice found out. Pulping roots and mixing feed requires time, which in these days is another name for money. So does cutting hay, while the dust raised by the latter job is by the subsequent handling of the chaffed

stuff is bad in winter for both man and beast. Then, too, cut fodder soon loses a part of its natural aroma, becoming more or less chippy. This is especially true of cornstalks, and, furthermore, experience proves that cattle fed altogether on cut stuff become greedy for a feed of long hay or straw. Probably the craving is induced in part by a desire for a change from the more or less acid flavor of the silage mixture, but partly, we believe, it is due to the desire of the cow for something long to chew. At any rate, a little long feed to distend the paunch is now advised by nearly all authorities on feeding. Taking all factors into consideration, therefore, opinion is veering unmistakably to the position that, while it may be all right to mix chaff or other coarse, unpalatable fodders with silage, for the purpose of making them softer and more acceptable, the cutting of good hay and the pulping of roots for animals which can "scoop" them is a waste of time, to say the least. However, while the hashing method in this matter no longer meets general approbation, great good has been done by emphasizing the importance of providing cattle with a generous amount of succulent food in the form of ensilage and roots, which are unmistakably conducive to thrift and profit.

Then, as for the plan of having water continually before cattle in the stable, while unquestionably it is a vast improvement over the old order that prevailed on not a few farms, under which the stock went once a day to a frozen pond or "the crick," and possibly got what water they needed, but often did not—while the new order was a great advance over the old, we are by no means sure it is all that it has been given credit for. Water in the stable must be kept from freezing in the pipes, and, while this is not so very hard to do if one uses a Globe valve on his supply pipe, some have tried to prevent freezing by keeping the stable atmosphere always above freezing-point. In the ordinary stable this precluded ventilation in cold weather, and the stables were consequently close, damp and unhealthful. It has been argued that inside water would be warmer, but the water in the basins or troughs in cold weather often becomes colder than freshly-drawn well water, such as might otherwise be pumped for the stock to drink. It is doubtless good for cattle to have water constantly before them, but the advantage, except on the score of saving labor, may be overestimated, and the man who will provide a trough or flat tank in a comfortable spot, say in a snug shed, such as every farmyard should have, will probably be quite as well off as his neighbor who installs an expensive system of indoor waterworks. However, on this point of watering we do not take strong ground. Individual conditions must determine.

Upon the subject of temperature, our stand has been fairly well indicated. We do not believe in trying to keep stables too warm. Have them dry, light and well ventilated, and the stock will be little the worse for an occasional dip of the mercury below freezing-point. It is satisfactory to find ourselves in line with such authorities as Dr. J. G. Rutherford, Dominion Veterinary Director-General, who is reported to have argued at the Eastern Dairymen's Convention that even 40 degrees is not too low a temperature for a stable, ultimate health of the inmates being considered. It is true that food is fuel; it is also true that health and vigor are absolute requisites to animal thrift. A high temperature is all right in summer, when it is natural. In winter it is unnatural and therefore pretty sure to be secured at certain sacrifice of ventilation, as well as being subject to more or less sudden drops. At last the sober conviction has been borne home that we

cannot turn the world upside down or the seasons end for end. Nature has provided us with summer and winter, and she manifestly does not intend to have stock cared for and fed the same in winter as in summer. When we attempt to do it, we multiply difficulties. That does not mean, of course, that we are to leave our stock out in the cold. Nature endows all her creatures with ability to withstand climatic adversity, but in the case of our domestic animals this resistant power has been reduced by long-continued care, which, in the effort to promote functional development, has protected them from the distress and strain of inclement nature. Within limits this is all right and proper, but deliberation of the whole subject impresses the danger of going too far in our artificial protection. The more we do, the less Nature will attend to, and, as a rule, Nature does things better than we. The warmer our barns, the shorter the coat of hair, the more sensitive the animals are to draft, and the more delicate when turned out. As a consequence, many do not get out at all; hence, in addition to other handicaps, they are denied the benefit of exercise, so necessary particularly for breeding stock. So it goes. One thing leads to another, and the ultimate result is weakened constitutions, inroads of disease, and reduced profits in feed-lot or at pail. It takes time for these results to manifest themselves in serious form, but they are being manifested in many Canadian herds to-day, and the sooner we get nearer the happy mean, to a more rational system of housing and feeding, avoiding unwise extremes of exposure on the one hand, and of pampering on the other, the better will it be for our pockets and our herds.

Stallion Inspection and License.

The appointment, by the Minister of Agriculture for Ontario, of a commission to secure a census of the stallions in service in the Province, to report upon their breeding and character as to soundness, and present a recommendation as to the advisability of adopting a system of enrollment and possibly of license, with a view to restricting the use of sires of an undesirable class, has already had the effect of drawing out a discussion of the question which can do no harm, but rather, as full and free and fair-minded discussion generally does, has thrown light upon the whole question of the necessity and the means of improvement of the horse stock of the country, which all are agreed is urgently needed, in order to meet the unprecedented demand for more horses of a better class than we have or are likely to have if, as in the past, inferior and unsound sires are used. Whatever may be the recommendation of the commission on the question of licensing, and whatever the subsequent action taken in the matter, it is a wholesome indication that few if any of those participating in the discussion have defended the use of grade sires, but nearly all have acknowledged the wisdom of the principle of breeding only from pure-bred and registered stallions. This admission alone, if it has the effect of inducing a more general use of the pruning knife, will result in more and a better class of geldings being placed upon the market, while the use of only pure-bred sires of a desirable type will serve to improve the young stock coming on to supply the market in future years. The temptation to keep for a stallion a grade colt of more than average promise is very strong, and is too often yielded to by farmers for their own or the country's good, the added expense of raising and handling an entire horse being almost invariably sufficient to satisfy them of the mistake of spoiling the chances of having a first-class gelding in order to raise a third-class stallion that may not more