

Are Blinders Necessary?

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

At least two-thirds of the horses we meet on the public highway have their bridles decorated with blinders. I use the word decorated advisedly, for it is somewhat difficult to understand how the custom of covering the horses' eyes should have become so general when there is no good reason for the practice. It seems to me, and I am sure if the greater number of your readers will look at it as I do that they will agree that, except in cases of defective sight, the blinder is not only useless but positively objectionable, rendering its wearer a prey to starts and fears to which he would be a stranger if he could use his eyes. A horse, it is claimed by renowned horsemen and can be proved by careful observation, does not see directly ahead of him, but his line of vision is obliquely outward and forward so that the blinder placed, as it is, parallel to the side of the animal's face, is bound to interfere with a great portion of the field of vision. We find horses that are ridden without blinkers wearing them when put in harness, and the reason given reflects little credit on the owners' common sense or eye for the beautiful. Nine out of ten will quote "fashion" as the reason for wearing them. Because it is the "fashion" the horse is subjected to what must be torture to him, so that he may not look undressed beside his fellows. If a few sensible people would inaugurate a fashion of no blinders, the tenth man would discover that a horse's appearance is greatly improved by his beautiful eyes being visible.

Some who would really like to discontinue blinkers are withheld by the idea, that when a horse has been used to them it is impossible to drive him without them. Those, however, who have made the experiment, myself among the number, do not find this to be the case. With a little patience and increasing common sense in explaining things to the horse, he soon accustoms himself to the change. Others imagine that, though a single horse may go all right without blinkers, they are necessary with a team, but this also has no foundation.

People who value their own safety will be wise to discontinue blinkers, for a horse who can see shies less than one who is half blind, and in any difficulty or accident is much quieter and more reasonable than one who is terrified by not knowing what is going on around him. If people could only realize that the horse, though nervous, is also a highly intelligent animal, they would not subject him to treatment which would confuse and frighten themselves and the horse, and accidents would be very much less frequent.

Those persons who cover up their horses' eyes seem to forget that the animals have very sensitive ears, which inform their owners of the approach of something (the half blind horse can not tell what). If he could see he would not be frightened, but only hearing terrifies him. Nor can he, owing to the blinkers, see that the terror is no longer pursuing him, and as he bolts madly along he imagines it is still coming after him. Even if the object being in front has been seen he is still unable to tell when he has passed it, and continues to fear it when he has left it far behind; while the frequently senseless conduct of his driver, in whipping him for being frightened, only serves to convince him that the thing he has seen or heard has hurt him. The wonder is that horse accidents are not more numerous than they are, considering the irrational way in which these long suffering animals are harnessed and driven.

Carleton Co., Ont.

J. S.

[Note.—Contrary to the belief that a horse accustomed to blinders will give trouble if driven without, he will not usually do so, but a horse accustomed to an open bridle and suddenly compelled to wear blinders will give all kinds of trouble. The writer has in mind a reliable but spirited heavy-draft team which had been driven for several years in open bridles, and which, when a new harness was bought, were forced to wear blinders, and the consequence was a serious runaway the first time hitched in the new harness, all caused by a covered buggy approaching the team from behind and passing at a rapid rate. These horses were thoroughly accustomed to covered buggies, but upon not being able to see the approaching object they got excited, and although previously never known to do so commenced kicking and running away at great speed. One of the horses fell in the runaway, and the driver was thus able to get them stopped. Injuries were not serious, but had the horse not fallen could not have proved otherwise as the team was a valuable one and the waggon carried fourteen pigs, and besides all this the driver's life was in great danger. This is only one of many such incidents which could be noted. Discard the blinders. Break the colts to the open bridle, and give them an opportunity to see for themselves everything before, by their side, and behind.—Editor.]

Must Get Rid of "Scrubs."

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

I have read "The Farmer's Advocate" with great interest, and I am of the opinion that there is no better agricultural paper offered to the people. Notwithstanding repeated advice of experienced horsemen it is difficult to persuade the average farmer of the great necessity of mating the brood mares with sound sires. But to meet those requirements is rather a serious matter in this part of the country, when we have so many inferior horses standing for service at the paltry service fee of seven and eight dollars for living colts. This kind of scrubs is ruining the country. Importers of high-class horses cannot compete with these scrub prices, and until something is done to reduce the scrub, little can be accomplished regarding the improvement of stock. Perhaps the government legislation will, in time, weed out the unsound stallions, but time is too valuable to wait. Why not follow up the Old Country method of having a premium horse of highest quality, pedigree and best of type and conformation? But to secure such a horse the service fee would require to be from twenty to thirty dollars per colt, but the extra expense would be far more than made up in the increased price of the offspring. I have no hesitation in saying that there is not forty per cent. of the agricultural horses sound around this part of the country. Breeders ought to exercise a little more care in choosing what is to become the sire of their colts. I would advise breeders to pay more attention to the pedigrees of sires, for good breeding always tells in all kinds of stock. Let us remember the fact that the colt inherits from the sire, the grand-sire and the great-grand-sire. No doubt it is difficult for farmers in this country to fully understand the pedigrees of imported horses containing the blue blood of Scotland. Such horses as trace directly to Hiawatha, Baron's Pride, Prince Sturdy, Sir Hugo, Baron of Buchlyvie, Everlasting, Oyama, Silver Cup, Momento, Silver Crest, Acme, Sir Everard, Orlando, Hiawatha, Godolphin, Radium, Royal Fashion, King of Kyle, Royal Edward, Pride of Blacon, Cimaron, and Up-to-Time, and all those passing through such sires as Prince of Wales, Darnley and MacGregor, are more likely to please every lover of a good Clydesdale. Now breeders patronize the horse with substance, size and quality regardless of service fees, and it will be interesting to watch the yearly improvement of your stock. I may state that I have handled horses all through the main parts of Scotland and England, and I think Canada ought to be the main center of the horse industry, only a little more judgment on the part of the mare owners, and the undersized scrub stallions will soon be a thing of the past.

Huron Co., Ont.

MATTHEW WALKER.

A Practical Horseman's Advice.

The following are a few practical points from an address delivered by Dr. H. G. Reed, V. S., of Georgetown, Ont., at a farmers' meeting recently held at Glencoe, Ont.:

The weakness in stock breeding is carelessness, not ignorance.

Do not go to extremes, always breed the mares to the most ideal horse available, i. e. do not attempt to get the best colt by breeding a mare short in pasterns to a stallion extremely long in the pastern, but use the one with the ideal length and obliquity of pastern.

If your neighbor's stallion is a scrub do not use him even though his owner may be a "nice" fellow. "No man can afford to take \$50 out of his own pocket to put \$10 in that of his neighbor."

"The foal at its birth is in just as good condition as his dam." Condition here does not refer to flesh. An excessively fat mare is not in good condition. She is "soft." Her muscular, respiratory, circulatory and nervous systems are not in as good "condition" as if she had been regularly exercised and the excess of fat not allowed to accumulate. A mare is more likely to bring forth a strong healthy foal if she herself is a little thin and has done daily duty in the harness than if she has been highly fed and exercised but little.

Give the brood mares the farm work in winter, providing this work is not over-strenuous and let the geldings stand idle. Idleness will injure them less than the mares.

When the colt arrives, avoid handling the navel. Have an antiseptic handy, as a ten per cent solution of carbolic acid and apply this to the umbilical cord as soon as the colt is foaled, and once or twice daily until the cord dries away and is entirely healed over. Apply with a clean sterilized cloth and keep the hands off the cord.

Prepare the box-stall for the mare about to foal. Clean the walls. Whitewash them and disinfect with a strong disinfectant, as carbolic acid solution. Keep the box well supplied with clean straw.

The man who wishes to make a success of draft-horse breeding must be a liberal feeder. An adult drafter should weigh from 1500 to 1600 lbs. at least and should have attained half that weight at a year old. Consequently colts must be well fed.

Horses in Canada spend too much time shut up in stables.

The best winter feeds—Clover hay, alfalfa hay, (each well cured,) oats, bran and roots.

The average farmer feeds more hay than necessary in winter. No animal should have hay before him at all times. Many Ontario farmers could profitably reduce the hay rations of their idle horses by one-half.

Overfeeding on hay is a predisposing cause of heaves.

Give all the hay the horse will clean up at the night feed, but give only a small quantity in the morning and at noon, and if he be a driving horse feed only a grain feed at midday and hay morning and night.

A careful farmer can feed good silage to a horse. (Note the words "careful" and "good.")

Where everything is normal whole oats are preferable to rolled oats, but for old horses, horses with ravenous appetites, and young horses teething rolled oats are often better.

Breed the draft horse and avoid crossing, and feed liberally.

It would have been an advantage to Ontario if nature had fixed the result of all crosses the same as that which produced the mule, unproductive.

Wants a Minimum Fee.

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

I have taken great pleasure in reading the articles in the "Farmers Advocate" re the Stallion Enrolment Act, and agree with Mr. McVitty, and others, that the act should be amended to provide for compulsory inspection, but cannot agree with Mr. McVitty that stallions should be graded, as I think each breeder should be his own judge of what horse suits his mare, and I don't think it is possible to get a committee of judges competent to judge and grade stallions, all over the country without being unjust to some owners. I think it would cause a lot of ill feeling among those owners whose stallions did not grade No. 1. A much better way in my opinion would be to set a minimum fee of say \$12 to be charged for service of all stallions of a draft breed. This would at least put owners of good horses on nearly equal ground with "scrub" owners. There are very few breeders that would use a scrub horse when they could use a good sound registered stallion for the same money, or very little more. If the elimination of the scrub stallion will cause a dearth of horses in some districts, I say let us have a dearth by all means.

For this district there travelled at one time four stallions, two being grade horses, run at a fee from \$2.50 to \$10. They left hundreds of colts, both being very sure horses, and they stood for many years in this district. The best colt of these grade horses that I ever saw or heard of, was sold this winter for \$235, and he was head and shoulders above the rest. The other two were registered Clydesdale stallions, one a very small horse, and the other, a very unsound horse, being so bad with the heaves, that his owners got him in a trade for a little pony worth about thirty or forty dollars. These two horses also left many colts, and nearly all good ones, many of their colts being prize winners at the local fairs. Now, these horses stood for about the same fee, at the same time, and got about the same class of mares as the grade horses, although I do not believe they got as many mares. Would we not have been better without the scrub stallions, even if we had to breed to grade No. 111 registered horses? I say sit on the scrubs, we will get them without breeding for them.

Let us hear what some other readers think about this minimum fee.

Bruce Co., Ont.

"INTERESTED."

It is reported that the Turkish Government has placed an order in the United States for 7000 cavalry horses, but the price offered \$140 is so low that it is also said that it will be impossible to fill the order.

Grain in the manger before the horse comes in looks bad. A tired horse should nibble hay for an hour or two before being given grain.