

ECHOES FROM THE WEST

Live Stock Progress in Alberta

The Alberta Fat Stock and Horse Show and bull sale, referred to briefly in your last issue, is deserving of greater attention. It is the event of the year to the live stock men and farmers of the province.

The show was held in the stables and buildings of the fair grounds, Calgary, and in the commodious sale buildings and amphitheatre erected by the city for the use of the stockmen. Additions will, however, have to be made, as the enlargements of the scope of the show are considered. Better provision for the display of the exhibits in the dressed carcass competition are necessary. As it is at present the educational possibilities of this feature are entirely lost, there being no display of the carcasses except to the judges. If they were on exhibition in some building near the other exhibits, where they could be used for comparison during the series of lectures given each day of the show, valuable lessons could be learned by those interested. Fortunately, the winners alive were generally the winners dead, with some few changes in place.

A GOOD OBJECT LESSON

Nowhere could a better object lesson be given than at this show of the desirability of maturing cattle at, say, three years old, rather than at four or five years, as is the case with so many of the ranch-fed cattle. The superior quality of the two and three-year-olds, as compared with the older stuff, was very apparent in the carcasses when examined together. The younger ones were fresh and juicy looking, with good color and generally weighing a much larger percentage of ripe, lean meat. While the older ones are not so well colored, the flesh is of coarser texture, with a larger percentage of fat to the total weight of carcass.

One can readily see why the feeder gets a smaller price per pound for the older cattle. And yet with the ranching conditions that have prevailed so far, where a starving and stinting process goes on each winter, the cattle are not ready for market until they have got past the age at which they would bring the better price.

April is the month of the year when the highest prices and greatest demand prevail for the best grades of fat cattle, hence the time at which the show was held this year is likely to be the most satisfactory time. But the first week in April suits the horsemen much better than at a later time in the spring. The probability, therefore, is that the Fat Stock and Horse Show will be held in future early in April, while the sale of bulls will take place about the last of May, as that date would suit contributors to the sale and probable buyers best. Better prices would probably be obtained by the breeders and the ranchmen would get their supply of bulls at a time when they have plenty of feed and will not be put to any extra trouble in taking care of them.

BULL SALES

The bulls offered at the sale numbering about 240, were not as good a lot as should be bought by the cattle raisers of Alberta, if the quality of beef offered for sale by export or home consumption is to be improved. While there were several good ones, creditable to the Alberta breeders, there were a great many that should have been exported as steers.

The rule excluding all bulls from the

sale except those bred in Alberta or owned there for at least two years and intended to prevent the sale of inferior bulls from other provinces, is really a menace to the improvement of the cattle of the country. It acts as a protection to the inferior bulls raised in Alberta by retaining the market for them to the exclusion of better ones. This was amply proven by the fact that when a good useful lot of bulls was offered at the sale the prices obtained were good. On the other hand, the majority sold for considerably less than actual cost, owing to their inferior quality; and these are the bulls offered to the breeders or ranchers. If the sale was open to other provinces a better class would be offered from outside, if necessary. Inferior bulls that would sell only at a loss would soon cease to be offered from outside and a better class would take their place. It is to be hoped the fallacy of this restriction will soon be seen by the stockmen interested.

The champion Shorthorn bull, exhibited by Jas. Sharpe, Lacombe, brought the highest price of the sale, \$170.00. The champion Hereford bull was not offered and the bull winning champion honors in the Aberdeen-Angus class, shown by Mr. Hutchinson, Duhamel, was secured in price at \$155.00. The highest priced group was that of J. L. Walters, Haynes, bringing an average of \$97.50 for nine head, while the average of all sold was about \$70.00. The upset price of the sale was \$50.00, under which none could be sold; about one-quarter of the number failed to make that figure. The carload competition for cattle was quite unique in the shows of this kind and brought out four loads of big four-year-old steers, which generally lacked the finish they would have after a 90 days feeding spell in the corn belt of, say, Illinois, or in the feeding stables of Ontario.

THE HORSE EXHIBIT

The horse exhibit was very attractive in all the classes, and much attention was given to the judging. The outstanding class of the show was the Clydesdales. The aged horses in this class were an exceptionally good lot, and the owner of the winner of the first prize secured an honor. Consel, owned by F. Beddingfield, won first place, and Charming Prince, owned by R. W. Meiklejohn, Cochrane, second. This latter horse was afterwards awarded championship as best Clydesdale bred in Canada.

Mr. J. M. Gardhouse judged the heavy horses, Dr. Tolmie the light horses, and the fat stock and bulls were judged by A. W. Smith. Great credit is due the management for conducting so successful a show.

Mr. J. I. Eakin, Lethbridge, Alta., who visited Toronto recently, reports rapid progress in the development of that part of the West. "The people in the East," he says, "have an idea how the West is going ahead. We have the finest climate in the world. January was cold and we had a lot of snow, but we hadn't the losses and hardships reported in eastern papers. That report about cattle dropping dead in the streets was a pure fabrication. You ought to see our Chinook wind lick up the snow. I have seen six inches of snow, falling in the morning, disappear by noon and the ground left as dry as a floor."

"The irrigated country is changing gradually. It has always been a purely stock country, but irrigation is bringing agriculture with it and ranching is disappearing."

Mr. Eakin stated fortunes were being made in real estate in his district. One young fellow who came to Lethbridge a few years ago without a cent is today worth \$100,000. Another young fellow invested all he had (\$450) in 600 acres of land, and within four months sold at an advance of \$8,900. Fall wheat lands are valued at from \$15 to \$20 per acre and irrigated lands at from \$30 to \$100.

The fattening of sheep at Port Arthur has been a great success this year, 9,000 being made ready for market. The yards are capable of holding 10,000, but a diligent scouring of the West resulted in only 9,000 sheep. The reason of this is not far to seek. Some of the Western men tried fattening sheep on screenings last year and found it so profitable that they secured bunches ranging from 500 to 6,000 early in the season and when the men from the head of the lakes arrived they had to take what was left. There is room and to spare for all the fat mutton that any of them can produce, and the breeders, now that they have had a good market for their range-grown sheep, will produce them in larger numbers.

The Port Arthur sheep were sheared in February and the clip ran about 65,000 pounds, which, at the present price of wool, is in itself a handsome item. Screenings (almost a waste product heretofore), a little hay, salt and abundance of fresh water, is the ration. The sheep are carefully graded before being put in the pens and there is very little loss from disease; in fact, the industry represents the maximum of result for the minimum of outlay.

That "Figs is Figs" is most fairly true in the West just now and is likely to be more so as the season advances. The young pig crop was smaller than it should have been and, owing to the cold, late spring, there has been heavy mortality. It is generally asserted by men well posted that the mortality would have been much smaller if the farmers had followed the advice given them by S. A. Bedford years ago and wintered their brood sows in the open and just given them a straw stack raised on posts to run under. Careful inquiry shows that the litters of sows wintered in this way have almost invariably come through all right, while the litters of sows that have been housed all winter, no matter how carefully tended, have died like flies.

The West imported last year over 3,500,000 pounds of hams and bacon and for the four months of the present year receipts at packing houses have not averaged one day's run a week. The average price of hogs for these months has been \$7.50 per cwt. weighed off cars Winnipeg, or \$6.50 to the farmer, so that it looks as if there was money in hogs for the man willing to take time and trouble.

The season continues an unsolved problem and recourse has been had to the annals of the Hudson Bay Company for any season that resembles the present for cold and delayed seeding. The nearest is the seeding of 1881, which was done from the 5th of May onward, and wheat cutting that year began on August 2nd.

To date (May 6th) less than 6 per cent. of the seeding has been done, and even if the weather were immediately to turn warm and send in ideal temperatures, it is evident there is not an hour to lose. With the most favorable conditions from this date forward the acreage sown to wheat must of necessity be very much curtailed, for the simple reason that there will not be