

THE TREATMENT OF MARES IN FOAL.

As the foaling season approaches, owners of pregnant mares are naturally somewhat concerned for their welfare, and as many Canadian farmers have a comparatively limited experience in horse breeding, a few hints as to the proper diet and general treatment of prospective equine matrons may not come amiss. The mortality among both mares and foals in this country is very much larger than it ought to be, and while in some instances doubtless, loss is unavoidable, in a great majority of cases the death of either dam or progeny is directly traceable to the ignorance, carelessness or cupidty of the owner.

In the first place a great many mares are annually bred which ought not to be put to the horse at all. The farmer who has but one breeding female and who calculates generously to give his mare a week's rest at foaling time, would in most cases find himself in pocket by either keeping her religiously from the stallion, or if unable to resist the temptation, by trading her for a gelding. No mare can be reasonably expected to work hard at all kinds of drudgery from year's end to year's end and at the same time develop, deliver and rear a foal at all likely to prove an ornament to his species or a source of profit to his owner. Mares used in this way are the victims of gross injustice, and such a system of horse breeding can end only in disgust and disappointment. Only such animals should be stinted as can be spared from the rougher and more arduous tasks of the farm both during pregnancy and for some time after foaling. The man who puts a good mare to the horse, rattles her through a stiff harvest, lifts an engine or separator with her several times in the fall, trots her sharply home from the elevator, hauls wood and hay with her all winter over all sorts of roads, her sole respite being in stormy weather when she stands tied up in a none too comfortable stable, on the hardest of hard feed, puts her into spring work and only removes the harness when labor pains make their appearance, is often the first to complain of bad luck because his breeding operations are not a success. The confidence of such men in Providence and in the procreative powers of their long suffering mares is apparently unbounded, for they never seem to profit by experience, failure appearing only to stimulate them to fresh experiments on the same lines. The number of abortions and premature births among mares handled in this unreasoning and unreasonable fashion is enormous, while malformation, malnutrition and malposition of the foetus are frequently induced in this manner. Of five mares which I noticed, some years ago now, one morning in March, tugging and straining over bare roads with big sleigh loads of wood, two aborted, one dropped a dead foal, one had the foal removed piecemeal, while the fifth after considerable difficulty actually succeeded in rearing a creature in some few general characteristics resembling the species to which he belonged.

In sharp contrast to the above-mentioned manner of handling mares is the pampering system, and while slightly preferable it is very far from being correct or advisable. In this case the pregnant mare is kept entirely idle during the winter; she is in foal, therefore she must not only do no work, but she must not leave the stable, lest she catch cold, lest she slip and fall, lest she run about and over exert herself. She is overfed with stimulating food, the system becomes loaded with fat, the muscular tissues are flaccid, the excretory organs are torpid, the circulation is languid, and when at last the foal sees the light it is puny, weak and undeveloped, more likely to die than to live, while if any trouble or