

The Outlook For and The Improvement of Dairy Cattle

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IT has become an established fact within recent years that the future prosperity and happiness of this country depends on the development and conservation of our agricultural resources, and that no line of agriculture favors so much the conservation of soil fertility as does dairying. Consequently, too, the breeding of dairy cattle assumes great importance.

Additional importance is now attached to the breeding of dairy cattle on account of the turn of international political affairs. There is a pronounced shortage of breeding and milking stock, so the demand for dairy cattle will last for years to come. Then, too, the increasing population of this country, through the land and the appreciation of the food value and economy of dairy products on the part of the consuming public, all tend to increase the demand for dairy products. Higher prices will be the result. The future of dairying, and the breeding of dairy cattle which is intimately related to it, certainly looks bright.

A man intending to breed dairy cattle for profit must have a notion of the type of cattle he wishes to produce. He must have an idea of the forces such as heredity, variation, etc., he has to contend with, and finally how to utilize the laws of nature to his best advantage.

Statistics indicate that only about one per cent. of the total number of dairy cattle is pure-bred. Uniformity of type, fixed characters and the certainty of their transmission is evident. The pure-bred cattle are the best

producers and serve to maintain a standard of development for the same and for inferior animals; they set a mark to be attained by the common types of cattle and thus bring about a general improvement. But to go into the business of breeding pure-bred stock one needs abundant capital, skill and knowledge of improved stock. Then, too, the cheapest and most economical production is not found in the pure-bred stock.

It is safer, when the capital is limited, for a breeder to start out with graded stock and improve it. High grade animals are far more useful than pure-breds; they are comparatively cheap; their production is valued, though they cannot be relied upon to transmit their characters.

A word about the common or the scrub class of dairy cattle. This is the most abundant class of those mentioned here. The animals are bred carelessly and in a haphazard fashion. No regard to ancestry is made in mating. No attention is paid except to the fact of the reproductive act. This class should be eliminated or improved.

Assuming, then, that a breeder starts out with graded stock, he should by all means use pure-bred males and as good females as can be obtained. The sire should have the prepotent characters of the breed and not of the individual. Vigor, typical size and external characters of the breed are useful indications of race prepotency. But the most reliable test of prepotency is to see the well-developed progeny of that sire.