

The Beef Industry of British Columbia

Dr. Tolmie has reported on beef raising in British Columbia to the Dominion Live Stock Commission as follows:

The first record that we have of the introduction of beef cattle into British Columbia was in the early forties, when consignments were brought to the southern end of Vancouver Island by the Hudson's Bay Company from their farm in what is now Washington State.

These animals were bred by the company for a number of years near Victoria, and they supplied animals to many individuals who commenced farming in the neighborhood.

During the time of the gold excitement on the Fraser river and in the Cariboo, in the sixties, a number of cattle were driven into British Columbia from Oregon, Washington and California for supplying beef to miners. About this time several small herds were established in what are now known as the cattle range districts in the interior of the province. Under favorable climate conditions, and with an abundance of feed, these herds increased rapidly and their surplus animals soon made a name for British Columbia bunch grass beef, which, for richness of flavor and fine quality, cannot be excelled anywhere.

For many years the ranchmen suffered on account of poor marketing facilities, often driving their stock for many days to some point on the Fraser river where it was possible to ship to the coast markets. Placer mining strikes at different points in the interior, from time to time, during these pioneer days provided the ranchman with a good market while the excitement lasted, and some of them, who are now very comfortably situated, can trace the beginning of their prosperity to the market created by these early day mining camps.

With the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, matters were entirely changed; since then the ranchman has been able to dispose of all he can produce, though sometimes at prices not as remunerative as he would wish.

Of late years the beef industry has not been making much progress, and on the coast has practically been abandoned in favor of dairying, which, under existing conditions and prices, is much more profitable, giving the farmer a regular income, and, with the demand for dairy products at present, he is placed in a much more independent position when marketing his produce.

In many districts of the interior, too, large tracts of what was once ranch land are being cut up for orchard and other purposes so that at the present time the British Columbia ranchman does not nearly supply local demand.

The first record we have of pure bred cattle coming to the province was in 1867, a pure bred bull coming from California in that year; more were brought from Oregon in 1873, and a consignment came from Ontario in 1874. As might be expected all of these were Shorthorns. There are at present several herds of pure bred Shorthorns and Herefords and one herd of Highland cattle. As far as I am aware there are no

pure bred herds of Galloways or Polled Angus in the province. A few years ago there were several herds of Shorthorns of good quality at the coast, but of late years, these have been nearly all dispersed owing to the fact that the principal market for bulls is in the range districts, where they prefer animals grown under range conditions. For this reason also the Ontario grown bull is not popular on the range. Pure bred range bulls sell for \$70 to \$125, according to quality.

For close ranging, and on the smaller ranges, where feed is more plentiful, the Shorthorn is preferred, while on the larger ranches where the animal's rustling abilities have to be depended on almost altogether, the Hereford has the preference. Yearlings, and upwards, are the age used and they are kept for about four years. One bull is turned out for every twenty-five or thirty cows and the calf percentage runs about 50 to 60 per cent. The calves are castrated in June and are weaned in November; they are usually fed hay all winter.

Thin cow stock are also fed some hay, while steers in this climate require some feeding about two winters in every five. Where feeding is carried on it is estimated that from 800 to 1000 pounds of hay per head, consisting of clover, timothy and brome grass, will winter a mixed herd of cattle in fine condition under ordinary circumstances. Alfalfa is successfully grown in some districts where it provides an excellent winter feed; in other districts it winter kills badly. Under the above system three-year-old steers are turned off in the summer weighing from 1200 pounds to 1300 pounds, while cows run about 1500 pounds.

Some years ago a few consignments of "dogies" were brought from Ontario, but they did not give satisfaction, and the shipments were discontinued.

Practically all the beef produced in British Columbia is marketed between June 15 and January 15, the price obtained being 4 1-2 cents for cows and 6 cents for steers at the railway shipping point. During the rest of the year the supply is obtained from Australia, New Zealand and Alberta. Much better prices would be obtained if the animals could be held over and marketed in the late winter and spring, but there is little prospect of this being done with hay running from \$12 to \$25 per ton.

A large modern abattoir has been established at Vancouver within recent years and many cattle are shipped there. The cattle buying and slaughtering business is falling into the hands of large concerns and the smaller retailer is rapidly disappearing.

It is expected that with the opening up of areas suitable for ranching in the northern part of the province which are now being tapped by railways, that the range cattle output will hold its own, but little change can be looked for in the immediate future in the district already settled as other lines of animals husbandry offer much larger profits than the production of beef under existing conditions.

Predatory animals do not cause much loss on the ranges. Occasional losses are

caused by bears and panthers, but these do no amount to much. Owing to the country being more or less heavily stocked with game little loss of live stock is caused by wolves, which are able to get their food in the forest. Coyotes are not credited by ranchmen with doing much damage. Some cattle men would like them protected on account of their destruction of gophers and other animals of a similar nature.

Range cattle here are practically free from disease. Tuberculosis is almost unknown on the range, while cattle mange does not exist in British Columbia. A small outbreak of black leg was reported a few years ago in the range country, but this should be easily controlled by the use of the preventive vaccine now supplied by the Health of Animals Branch at the nominal price of five cents per dose.

Great improvement could be made in the cattle industry by the irrigation of larger areas of land for the production of alfalfa and other suitable forage to be followed by a more liberal system of winter feeding. This should be coupled with a careful selection of breeding animals and the use of only pure bred sires of good quality.

The beef cattlemen of the province should form an association and heartily cooperate with one another, bearing in mind that in unity there is strength. One of the first objects of this association should be to improve market conditions and to insure graded prices according to the quality of their stock. Another matter that will need attention in the near future is the systematic re-seeding of the ranges with valuable bunch grass which, apparently will be exterminated in some places if some method is not soon adopted for its preservation.

Beekeepers are invited to send in questions on Beekeeping to Fruit and Farm Magazine, which will be answered by an expert.

ELECT NEW OFFICERS

Members of Farmers' Institute Meet in Chilliwack.

At the annual meeting of the Chilliwack Farmers' Institute held in the city hall recently, there was a representative attendance of members. The auditor's report and financial statement showed the Institute to have had a very flourishing year, and that it was never in a healthier condition. The turnover for the year for powder and supplies exceeded \$3700. Mr. James Bailey, president, presided, and the secretary's report was read by Mr. J. W. Galloway, after which the election of officers was proceeded with and resulted as follows: President, James Bailey; vice-president, J. R. Walker; secretary, Horatio Webb; directors, J. R. Walker, J. A. Evans, E. D. Barrow, H. Webb, J. A. Coatman, Jas. Bailey, E. A. Wells and N. E. Gillanders. Mr. James Bailey was elected to the office of convention to be held in Victoria.