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EDITORIAL.

More Thorough Supervision of Official Tests.

The Holstein-Friesian Association of Canada, in annual meeting at Toronto this month, adopted the system of yearly testing, recognized the Dominion Government's plan for a Record of Performance, based on yearly tests under the Department of Agriculture's supervision, and appointed a committee to arrange the standards of milk and butter-fat production necessary to qualify Holstein heifers and cows for registration in the Record of Performance for their breed. The Record of Performance they are willing to publish as an appendix to their herdbook, but they assume no responsibility for such records, which they set forth as private tests under Government supervision, and decline to accept them as of equal credibility or value with the weekly and monthly tests conducted by their association, under strict official surveillance, and published in their own well-established Record of Merit. The feeling among most of the Holstein breeders was not very strong in favor of the Record of Performance system of yearly testing, but it was adopted for the benefit of those members who might desire to take advantage of it. It was decided, however, not to proceed unless the Government were found willing to continue to bear all the expense of the official supervision. This proviso was inserted on the strength of a report that the Government would not bear the expense of keeping more than one man engaged in this work of supervising tests of pure-breds, and that if the work grew beyond his ability to look after, the extra expense would have to fall upon the breed societies.

We are not advised whether the above rumor is correct or not, but we trust the Department will not, for the lack of a few men, discourage any breed society or any individual owners of pure-bred dairy cattle from taking up this excellent line of work. We believe the Record-of-Performance idea is fraught with more possibilities for the economic improvement of dairy herds than all the live-stock exhibitions in the country. If there are enough breeders anxious to test cows in their herds, with a view to qualifying them for admission to the Record of Performance, to keep a dozen officials busy, so much the better. Those dozen men will accomplish more substantial good for the country than the same number at Institute work talking up the doctrine of stock improvement. Our pure-bred herds are the fountain-head of all stock improvement. Whatever assists in the intelligent breeding of pure-bred stock, tends ultimately to improve the grade and mongrel herds in all parts of the country.

Not only would the Minister of Agriculture be warranted in defraying the expenses of testing a largely-increased number of herds, but the force should be strengthened to enable the work to be much more thoroughly and carefully supervised. Under the present system, the official representing the Department visits each herd about four times a year. He takes the samples for testing, and his visits are also a check upon the daily milk records. In the main, this system gives us fairly accurate records, and, with an honorable breeder, the test is as reliable as could be wished. But while the great majority of Canadian breeders will keep accurate records without much oversight, there are occasional ones who might yield to the temptation to give the cow credit for half a pound or a pound more milk a day than she actually yielded. If she fluctuated from any cause, the tendency would be to overlook a tem-

porary shortcoming and set down the weight of the previous milking rather than record a shrinkage. In fact, there are various chances for padding the records so as to make the yearly milk yield 500 pounds or so higher than it actually is. What we need is a much more frequent inspection—once a month would be none to often—so as to keep a closer check on the breeder's milk record and increase the chances of a fair test for butter-fat. The Holstein men pointed out these things, and held that, as absolute official weekly tests of their great cows were doubted by the public, still less value would be attached to the somewhat looser Record-of-Performance test. They believed that the other system of their own, which they are now encouraging, of making weekly or monthly official tests of cows just after calving, and of same cows again eight months later, was more reliable and better than the Record of Performance. There is some force in their contention, and, while we favor yearly records as being simpler to write and talk about, more easily comprehended by the public, and more satisfactory all round, still we would again urge what we have held before, viz., that the official supervision of these yearly tests should be much more thorough than it is, and we hope the Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Sydney Fisher, and his Lieutenants of the Live-stock Branch may give this matter further attention. We want yearly records that cannot be impugned, and the more of them the better.

Dog Tax and Sheep Insurance.

At the Dominion Sheep-breeders' annual meeting at Toronto, a fortnight since, one of the important matters discussed was the executive's recommendations in the way of asking the Ontario Government to amend the "Act for the Protection of Sheep, and to impose a tax on dogs." As explained editorially in "The Farmer's Advocate" of Jan. 3rd, there is on the Provincial statute book a fairly good law providing that a municipality shall levy on each dog kept within its limits a tax of one dollar, and on every bitch two dollars, excepting in the case of a kennel of pure-bred dogs, which is taxed a straight ten dollars. The money thus levied is intended to constitute a fund from which the council shall pay to the owner of any sheep injured or destroyed by dogs which cannot be discovered, or by dogs owned by persons from whom nothing can be recovered by law, a sum not exceeding two-thirds the value of the sheep destroyed. The weakness of the law is that, on petition of twenty-five ratepayers, the council may pass a by-law annulling this act in whole or in part, so far as their municipality is concerned. As there is no provision for restoration upon counter petition, the act stands partially or wholly repealed in many townships. In other cases a minor injustice has resulted from the council's rule of establishing a maximum valuation for sheep destroyed and refusing to recompense the owners to an extent beyond that amount. Consequently, the owner of a scrub sheep killed, may, in some cases, receive as much damages as the owner of a valuable pure-bred. It is true the law gives the councils no authority to fix any such maximum valuation, and the owner of a valuable sheep can, by action, compel them to pay two-thirds of the full value, but lawsuits are notoriously expensive, and few individuals care to incur them, preferring to take what they can get without suing.

The recommendations passed at the Sheep-breeders' meeting call for a tax of one dollar on a single dog, two dollars on a second dog kept

by one man, and five dollars on every bitch, with the exemption already provided for kennels of pure-bred dogs. The clause requiring not more than two-thirds compensation for sheep destroyed, was changed to read "not less than two-thirds." The right to repeal the act by local by-law, the sheepmen desire to have struck out entirely, making it operative in full in every township. They also asked to have a new clause inserted providing for the appointment in each locality of a competent sheep inspector to appraise damages in cases where the owner intends to make application to the council for compensation, the inspector to be given notice by the sheep owner within forty-eight hours after the injury is committed. The inspector would then investigate the case within forty-eight hours after receiving such notice, and forthwith make his report in writing to the clerk of the council, his report to be used as evidence in adjusting the claim.

The changes suggested are designed to reduce the number of worthless, sheep-worrying curs and at the same time provide a fund for the insurance of sheep owners, without imposing any real hardship upon the lover of a good dog. No man who really cares for his dog will begrudge a tax of one dollar a year. Many people feel that a farm is incomplete without a good collie, but in the interest of the sheep-breeders, whose business is more or less jeopardized by the keeping of dogs, are abundantly willing to contribute their share of the sheep-insurance fund. To ask the sheepmen to provide their own insurance is unfair. The man who keeps the stock which does the damage should pay the man who suffers.

There is, to our mind, just one lack in the above recommendation. It makes no provision for the use of town and incorporated-village dog taxes to help pay damages caused by these half-starved curs in neighboring municipalities. One of our correspondents has suggested that the dog taxes of each county be pooled to accomplish this end. At first sight this looks plausible enough, but there seem to be several objections. Township councils would be somewhat jealous of any attempt to take the control of the dog tax out of their hands, even if, as has been mooted, the balance over and above the amount paid out as sheep claims were returned to them pro rata at the end of the year. Then, too, county councils do not meet frequently, and there would be some delay in the settling of sheep claims. Furthermore, the county council is not supposed to deal with matters of purely local nature. At the same time, there should be some means devised, if at all possible, whereby a part of the tax on town dogs might be available for compensation of sheep killed or injured by them in the country. It is scarcely fair to ask the owners of country canines to pay taxes to reimburse owners of sheep killed by town dogs, and we trust our legislators may find some means of adjusting this matter.

The whole subject is a legitimate one for discussion, and we desire the opinions of readers, not only in Ontario, but in other Provinces and States as well.

Machinery and science in farming have released the successful farmer of to-day from the thralldom and drudgery of labor to a great extent. The successful farmer is the man who has learned the science of the soil and the growth of crops, or of growing and fattening of animals, or increasing the production of milk, eggs and other farm products by the best use of the feeds and materials at hand.

May not cattle be comfortable without being either coddled or exposed to hardship?