

THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE AND HOME MAGAZINE.

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DOMINION.

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HORSES.

ACTION.

In this country the term action, by universal consent, refers to the trotting gait. It is common knowledge that, however good an animal may be in external conformation, without action he fails to command attention, and is relegated to the drudgery of his kind. The trot is a gait in which the limbs are moved diagonally. The off fore and the near hind limbs reach the ground simultaneously, and this is repeated by the near fore and off hind members.

The relation of the feet when brought to the ground will vary for each individual, or for the same individual under different circumstances. Sometimes the hind feet are brought to the ground behind the fore ones; at others they fall more or less exactly upon the same spot, while in some, again, they extend for some distance in front of them.

I note several varieties of movement are distinguished by the French as the "short trot," "the ordinary trot," and "the long trot."

All these several relations exhibited by the feet while moving may be seen in the same animal at different times, while in some horses one or the other is more or less constant under different circumstances. As to pace, the extent of ground covered in the action of trotting in a given time, or, in other words, the length of the step, differs in different horses. In some it is long and reaching, in others short and choppy.

No doubt it has relation with the age, length of limb, the force and extent of the muscular contractions, and to other points in development and conformation which need not be referred to here. The problem, however, is very difficult of satisfactory solution, owing to the many factors by which it is influenced. It will, however, be remarked that in this respect considerable difference is noticed in different animals. It will be observed that many small horses will outpace animals hands higher than themselves. In these cases explanation will be found in the fact that the rapidity of movement of the limbs in the former is much in excess of those of the latter, and that the long step of the larger horse is equalled or exceeded by the more frequent repetition of the step in the smaller one.

Quite apart from pace, the trot should be marked by symmetry of action; however good the fore action may be, unless the movements behind are in harmony with it, the gait will lack that grace and beauty which go to make up a good horse. It is noticeable in some animals that the knees are freely flexed, the stroke of the limbs is parallel with the long axis of the body, and the step is light and easy, but there is frequently in these cases a marked deficiency of forward propulsion. The hind action in such animals is wanting in that full and complete flexion of the hocks which impels the body forward and gives harmony to the movements of the whole. When this defect exists, the fore action is seldom of that far-reaching character which obtains in animals otherwise constituted.

The converse of this is seen in those cases where the fore limbs are shot out in a more or less straight line, and the contact of the foot with the ground appears to fall upon the heels. There is in these cases only slight flexion of the legs, but the hind limbs are advanced in a vigorous manner, and the body is thus impelled forward. Although an unsightly mode of action, the gait in this instance is decidedly progressive, and the pace much increased.

Horses with high-striding action behind sometimes allow their hind limbs to dwell momentarily in a state of extreme flexion. This, however, is not a constant condition of the gait, and, being of a temporary character, quickly passes away as the animal cools down and settles into his natural stride. Not the least important point to be considered in this gait is the manner in which the feet are brought into contact with the ground. In some horses, for various reasons, the body falls upon the limbs with great force, and the sound emitted by the feet is strikingly loud, while in other animals it is hardly noticeable. In these horses the touch of the feet upon the soil is light and airy, and in contrast with others there is little loss of time in the movement. Horses with loaded upright shoulders are amongst those of the class referred to, and others in which the axes of the limbs are faulty, the body sways from side to side, and the feet are made to hit the ground with unnatural force—Prof. Wortley Aye, in English Live-stock Journal.

HORSE CLASSES AT FAIRS.

The classification of horses at the annual exhibitions frequently furnishes a topic for considerable criticism. Where is there a place for several sections making up what is called the general-purpose class? Even at some of the larger shows it is impossible to discern at a glance whether the string brought before the judge should be classed as carriage horses or not. In some instances many specimens are nothing but light draft horses. The fact that no definite description of the class seems possible is the strongest backing in behalf of having it eliminated from the prize lists, or at least so cut down that the funds of the society would not be paid to such an extent as an encouragement to the rearing of a mongrel horse.

Horse judges of repute do not hesitate to give their opinions in no uncertain words. W. F. Kydd, of Simcoe, who has known Clydesdales of high quality in Scotland since he was big enough to know what a horse is, and who for years has made the awards acceptably in horse-rings in all parts of Canada, after attending eight of Ontario's leading county fairs this fall, discussed the question with a representative of "The Farmer's Advocate" recently. "In connection with the horse exhibits at our fall fairs," said Mr. Kydd, "I would like to see the general-purpose class dropped from the prize list, with the exception of one section for team and another for single horse. There is no special place for the general-purpose horse to fill. He is not particularly useful any place, except on the farm. What is he but a mongrel-bred animal? Should agricultural societies offer premiums for young men to breed such horses? Can it be called educational? It is pointed out that the general-purpose horse is one that can plow and haul a heavy load of grain or hay, and also be suitable for driving in a buggy. What can fill the bill except an overgrown carriage horse? There are four standard classes that the market demands, viz.: Draft, or agricultural, carriage, road and saddle. These are what the young men of our Dominion should be encouraged to produce.

"As to my reasons for giving prizes for team and single horse: There frequently are some horses that are misfits or freaks of exceptionally high quality. They belong neither to the agricultural nor carriage classes. Reasonable prizes for such specimens would not be out of place, but under no circumstances should premiums be given that would encourage the rearing of such animals."

"Some fairs, also," continued Mr. Kydd, "have a strange classification for carriage horses and roadsters. The division is arrived at on a basis of height, e. g., carriage horses, 16 hands and over; roadsters, under 16 hands. With such system of classifying, a high actor of 15 hands 3 inches must necessarily go in the roadster class, while a capital road horse of 16 hands is put into the carriage class."

EXPORT DUTY ON BREEDING MARES SUGGESTED

The imposition by Canada of an export duty on mares is a proposition suggested to "The Farmer's Advocate" by a prominent horse exhibitor, his idea being that we should discourage the export of breeding female stock, letting foreign purchasers take geldings if they want work animals. The imperative requirement of the horse-business in Canada, it is argued, is a large number of high-class mares, any legitimate means calculated to prevent decrease of the supply being considered justifiable.

It cannot be said that there is any considerable export trade in mares going on at present, but from time to time a limited number of these find their way over to Scotland or across the International Boundary Line, and the trade is liable to be resumed at any time.

Against the proposal it might very well be urged that as the trade is small, legislative interference were scarcely worth while. The maintenance of unrestricted free trade in pure-bred breeding stock (excepting such quarantine and other regulations as might be advisable to exclude disease) has much to commend it, as the freer the exchange of pure-bred breeding stock throughout the world, the better it is for the progress of the breeds whose blood is so interchanged. While it is conceivable that in special cases, as in the founding of a breed, the temporary restriction of export might prove advantageous to such breed, as well as the country of its origin, still this argument would appear to be outweighed in the majority of cases by the larger and more far-reaching interests that would be served by the