Indigestion in the Horse

Dr. H. G. Reed, Halton Co., Ont.

An attack of acute indigestion is likely to prove more serious in the case of the horse than in any other animal on the farm. This is due in part to the comparative smallness of the stomach, which, in the horse, is smaller in proportion to its size than in any other domesticated animal.

With rare exceptions diseases of the digestive system are due to errors in feeding. When horses are sufficiently and not over-abundantly fed with dry food of a proper quality the stomach rarely suffers from disease.

CAUSES

Indigestion is often caused by a sudden change from a liberal and nutritious diet to coarse, poor and indigestible fodder. Such a change often takes place at this season when the ground freezes up and the farm horses are thrown out of work. The opposite condition may produce digestive troubles, as for example, in the spring when horses are put to work the change from a meagre to a liberal diet is often made very suddenly. A sudden increase in the quantity of the grain ration often produces sickness.

Cases of this kind are not uncommon in the winter among farm horses. Often after standing in comparative idleness for some weeks or even months, some sudden emergency will arise that necessitates a hard day's work. In order to prepare his team for the extra exertion the owner gives a very much larger feed of oats for breakfast and starts out on his journey only to find, in too many cases, that he has a sick horse.

POOR MASTICATION A CAUSE

Stomach trouble may also arise from improper mastication of the food, as where a ravenous horse bolts his fodder too greedily, or where, because of diseased or worn-out teeth, it is impossible for the animal to properly chew his food.

Weakness of the stomach resulting from some debilitating disease is sometimes a cause of indigestion, and occasionally animals are born with a constitutional digestive weakness. In such cases the greatest possible care is necessary to guard against attacks, a grain ration at rare or uncertain intervals being almost sure to produce sickness.

DANGEROUS GRAINS

Some kinds of food good in themselves and theoretically calculated to be proper for the horse are found in practice to be dangerous. Wheat, for instance, which is a highly nutritious food, is found to derange the stomach of the horse, causing purgation, lamanitis and even death. Barley also, while not so dangerous as wheat, is not a suitable food for horses unless mixed with oats or bran. Any kind of cooked food ought to be used with great care and fed in small quantities for a time till the stomach becomes inured to its use. Bran also, so useful when combined with other foods, or as an occasional mash, if given in large quantities is very likely to produce stomach trouble.

Musty or over-ripe hay or any kind of straw are common causes of digestive derangement. Green foods, particularly when animals are first put on them or if given too abundantly, produce enlargement and bloating.

A CAUTION ABOUT STRAW

The present season, due to the shortage of the hay crop, will likely find many horses being fed largely on straw. While most horses will do very well on straw with some grain, care ought to be taken not to induce the horse to eat a large amount of straw by the quite common practise of mixing a lot of cut straw with a little meal and thus coaxing the animal to overload its stomach with very indigestible food. The meal should be fed by itself and let the horse be its own judge as to how much of the straw it will eat.

Very little reflection will convince most men that in treating an attack of acute indigestion little or no good results come from administering medicine into the stomach. The stomach is for the time being inactive. There is no assimilation of its contents taking place. Consequently the medicine simply lies there and is not assimilated by the system at all and, with the exception of some drugs that might have a slight chemical action, do neither good nor harm. It will be seen how useless it is for any man to try and successfully treat the disease without having the means of administering drugs hypodermically injected under the skin.

A farmer ought to avail himself of all possible knowledge in the way of feeding and caring for his horses in order to avoid having cases of the kind. If he should happen to have a case, the wisest course he could pursue is to send at once for competent veterinary assistance.

The Health of the Herd Bull

E. Watson, Huntingdon Co., Que.

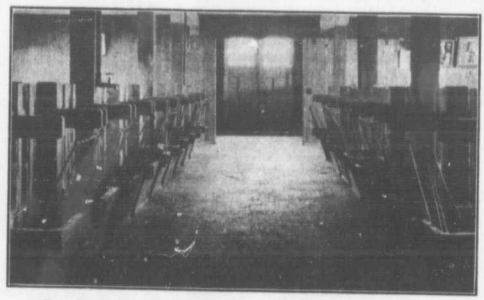
"I wonder what is the matter with my bull. He seems to be absolutely useless." So spoke a French farmer to me some days ago. And I told him without any hesitation.

That farmer did not realize that exercise is essential if the herd bull is to do good service. His bull was never out of its stall from year's end to year's end, except occasionally for service. Not getting exercise, it had lost ambition and vitality. And vitality, outside of good breeding, is the most important quality in a sire.

And the bull was not fed well. True, it looked as if it were in good flesh, but that was due to lack of exercise. Hay was about the only food it got to eat.

I have found that if we are to get satisfaction from our herd headers it is absolutely essential that they get lots of exercise, and be well fed. We have a strongly fenced paddock for our bull, and he is there every fine day, winter and summer, for a few hours at least. The fresh air and exercise keep his vitality at high water mark. And he makes good use of a fairly liberal ration of grain feed in addition to hay and roots.

I believe that the trouble with many of the unsatisfactory bulls in the country is due to one or both of these causes. I do not know whether my French neighbor took my advice as to the care of his bull, but I do know that all who follow my practice are not troubled with unsatisfactory sires.



These Mangers can be Regulated to Suit the Length of the Animal

The mangers in the stable of Mrs. Wm. McKenzie, Victoria Co., Ont., here illustrated, can be moved so as to vary the length of the stall to fit the animal. Three different lengths of stall can be made. There are several other good points about this stable. It is light, well ventilated and clean. Just the kind of a stable in which cows will do their best work at the pail.

—Photo by an editor of Farm and Dairy.

A man in North Carolina who did much for the cause of education used to say, "Educate a boy and you educate an individual; educate a girl, and you educate a whole family."

We Can Control the Feed Supply

Henry Glendinning, Ontario Co., Ont.

We farmers cannot control the elements. Can we control the feed supply? The past summer was exceptionally dry. The catch of clover in 1910 was not good, and in 1911 we had the worst spring for killing out clover that I have ever known. Alfalfa survived better than the clover, but it was not at its best. Pastures were very poor. And we were not responsible for the weather conditions that caused this.

There was one crop, however, that was not short. Indian corn was excellent. It has been the case for years that corn is a success when other crops fail. My solution of the feed supply problem is to grow more corn; corn for winter feeding and for summer feeding as well.

OUR MISTAKES WITH CORN

I do not believe in growing the large, mammoth southern corn. It does not reach a proper stage of maturity and has but little food value. We are making a mistake also in cutting the corn and spreading it in the pastures for the cattle to eat. This is unprofitable. My idea is to grow silage corn only, put it into the silo and feed each day in the year. If we have the summer silo we are never caught by a dry season. When fed in conjunction with pasture grasses, silage makes an excellent summer feed.

Milk contains 3.6 per cent. of casein. This casein or protein is the most important element to be looked for in foods for milk production. If on analyzing a food we find that it is rich in protein we can almost take it for granted that that food is a good milk producer. An analysis of corn shows that it is low in protein content.

WHERE SILAGE IS DEFICIENT

Here is where many have fallen down in their use of silage. They have fed corn silage alone without making up the deficiency in protein. Silage is bulky, succulent, palatable and cheap, but we must add the protein.

We want some protein food that is cheap. Alfalfa has supplied that want. We grow both corn and alfalfa in abundance, and the farmer who does that does not need to "call the king his uncle." We can produce from five to six tons of alfalfa hay to the acre. We can put it in the barn at a cost of less than $4 a ton.

Alfalfa, corn and the silo; with these three we farmers can control the weather, decrease cost of production and make dairy farming profitable.

An ample supply of ice on the farm is of great economic importance. The work of harvesting and storing is done at a season when it will cost very little, as help and teams are usually less remuneratively employed during the winter than during the summer months. The cost of constructing ice houses and refrigerators is small in comparison with the economic returns and the comfort which they afford. Ice is of greater economic importance in the country than in the city, yet few who have the opportunity avail themselves of this luxury.—E. C. Denn, York Co., Ont.

Good planning always precedes success.