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WHEN WRITING TO ADVERTISERS PLEASE MENTION THE GUIDE

The Farmer's Dog

By H. Higginbotham

A dog census would probably reveal the fact that almost every Canadian farmer keeps at least one dog. Yet how many farmers, not excepting those who are breeding pure bred cattle and horses, keep a pure bred dog? One's experience answers: "very few." Canadian farmers in general, it appears, have not realized the value of a good dog, for one rarely sees the dog on a Canadian farm trained to such usefulness, as, for instance, in the Highlands of Scotland, where the dog makes economical sheep herding possible. Most people are familiar with the tales of fidelity displayed by the shepherd dogs of older lands. The cow pony has hitherto been the most useful animal to the Canadian rancher, but with the introduction of sheep on lands formerly roamed by immense bands of cattle and the breaking up of the cattle industry into smaller herds, the pony is becoming relatively less and the dog more important.

No Best Breed

What breed of dog is best? The question which is so often put to cattle men and poultry men: "Which is the best breed to keep?" is likely to be asked of one advocating the keeping of a good dog on the farm, and the answer must be the same as that usually given: "It all depends on what you are looking for; there are many good breeds and the best thing to do is to select the one most suited to your needs and which appeals to your taste." Altogether there are at least 200 varieties of dogs, most of them having very distinct characteristics. It is not necessary for the farmer to consider all of these. There are a few of the best known breeds, any of which, if a good specimen is kept, would be well worth their keep on the farm. By keeping a pure-bred specimen the farmer will save himself endless worry, for mongrels are apt to be up to all sorts of mischief; and when the litter of puppies comes, instead of being merely a nuisance to be got rid of as quickly as possible, it will be a source of pleasure as well as profit to the owner.

The Utility Dog

The many varieties of dogs can be fairly well divided into six distinct races: Wolf dogs, greyhounds, spaniels, hounds, mastiffs and terriers. All known dogs can be classified under one or other of these race groups. Another common classification is now in general use, "sporting" and "non-sporting," according to the use to which they are put. All show dogs are entered under one or other of these classifications. Dogs which are bred on a miniature scale as pets are usually designated "toys." The toy dog may and often is kept in the farm home, as elsewhere.

It is the type of dog, however, which is essentially a "worker" which is generally needed on the farm. Dogs, like horses or cattle, need training for the work they are intended to perform. The reason there are so many useless dogs on farms is because they were not trained, but, like Topsy, just "grewed." This is somewhat surprising when it is remembered that there is no other animal which will so well repay the time spent on his training as will the dog. It is claimed for him that he possesses the highest intelligence in the animal kingdom, and certainly no animal has shown himself to be better adapted to the role of friend and helper of mankind. It is because the material was wrong to begin with or because the farmer did not use patience and kindness if the farm dog does not turn out well. So much depends upon the breeding and hereditary qualities of the animal.

Does Two Men's Work

No one will dispute the value of the collie on the farm. Among cattle or sheep, when properly trained and handled, the collie will generally do as much work as two men on horseback. The collie shows high intelligence and obedience to the word of command and will carry out the wishes of the master with promptitude and faithfulness. He quickly gets to know the animals in a herd and will drive off strange cattle; if one is missing he will hunt for it and by the use of his

scent and instinct will generally bring back the missing animal quite unassisted. The collie shows the same love of tending cattle as a sporting dog shows in finding game. In fact the extent to which the best specimens of this breed can be trained is limited only by the capacity of their owners to train them. The collie is almost equally useful among horses or swine and the writer knows one farmer who has trained his collie dog to look after the chickens. This dog performs his work so well that he has been seen to pick up a stray chick in his mouth and return it to the mother hen. Some of the best collies in existence are now being bred in Western Canada.

The Airedale terrier is often described as the "general utility dog." He is certainly put to all kinds of uses and generally performs satisfactorily what is expected of him. One Airedale breeder, speaking to the writer, claimed that "the Airedale can do anything that any other dog can do, and ten other things besides." Numerous instances could be cited of Airedales being employed in every kind of work usually given to dogs. The breed possess high intelligence, combined with pertinacity and fearlessness. They are compactly built and possess great strength for their size. A couple of good Airedales are a match for any coyote, they are good in hunting bear, for wing game, as watch dogs, and can be used to advantage in the sleigh or pack team. There should be no difficulty in farmers getting the best type of Airedale dogs in the West.

A Profitable Field

The old English sheep dog is almost exclusively a farm-dog and the highly trained representatives of this breed perform surprising feats in the herding of sheep and cattle, often entirely unaided by man. In training these dogs it was the habit of sheep men to suckle them on a ewe and let them run with the flock like lambs; in this way they acquired an attachment to the flock which nothing could break and cases of sheep dogs attacking a sheep are practically unheard of. There are very few of the breed in Western Canada today. There is a profitable field for any sheep farmer in Western Canada to breed and train these dogs.

There are a number of other breeds of dogs, any of which would be useful on the farm. Most farmers are fond of sport and when they have the time to indulge their liking a good dog will be found a great help and a safe kind of companion. Any of the varieties of setters, the retriever, the spaniel, the pointer and some of the hounds would be well worth breeding by the farmer who has a taste for sport and a liking for dogs. The farm is the best place to breed any kind of an animal and the sporting dog raised on the farm, provided he is given the attention required, is likely to excel among his compeers.

Protection from Coyotes

The coyote is a constant source of trouble in all but the most closely settled parts of the West to sheep raisers and poultry keepers. Dogs are the best protection for the sheep or poultry flock. Many farmers have secured a hound with the idea of warding off attacks from these marauders. In numerous instances where a single dog has been kept for this purpose, the results have not been altogether satisfactory, the dog often failing to show sufficient hostility to the intruder. In most cases of this kind the trouble has been watchdog and coyote were of opposite sex. The domestic dog and the wolf are very closely related, as is shown by the fact that the offspring resulting from the cross are not sterile. For effective protection from coyotes a pair of dogs should be kept, one of each sex. The domestic dog will attack the male but not the female of the coyote and the same applies to the other sex. The Russian wolf-hound is being largely kept in districts where coyotes are troublesome. Others of the hound family can be trained equally well for this purpose.

DOES FLAX GROWING PAY?

A subscriber in Saskatchewan wants to know whether it is best to grow flax on spring plowed stubble land or on new breaking. Prof. Bracken, Department of Field Husbandry, Saskatchewan, has the following advice to offer concerning flax growing:

"The practice of sowing flax on spring breaking is one that, under normal conditions in dry climates, should not be encouraged. In occasional favorable seasons, fairly profitable crops are secured in this way, but on the average it has been proven almost beyond question that it is not a profitable procedure. Our experience at the university would favor the use of plowed stubble land for flax in preference to spring breaking, particularly if the soil is heavy. Last year, which, of course, was exceedingly dry, all our crops on spring breaking failed absolutely, but none of those on stubble—even third crop stubble—failed to give us an adequate return for the work put upon them. Spring breaking sown to flax or any other crop may produce nothing, or it may produce an average yield in a favorable year, but in either case, the land can only with great difficulty be put in fit condition for a fair crop the following year. We are of the opinion that the practice experience has shown to be best should not be discarded except under abnormal conditions of season or price of crops. We should keep in mind the fact that we are farming not for the 1915 crop only, but for the 1916 and later ones as well. We would prefer using the old land for flax and break the new land thoroughly for a crop next year."

Experience not Encouraging

The general feeling of farmers throughout the West is averse to flax growing. There are several reasons for this. Four and five years ago the price for flax seed was very high. A great many farmers noticing this decided to grow flax and a comparatively large production resulted. Prices for flax went down, the yields from the crop were not very satisfactory in a great many cases, owing to improper handling of the crop, both with regard to the preparation of the land and in the subsequent seeding and threshing of the grain. So that generally flax has not been sown to any very large extent for the past couple of years. This spring it seems that farmers might do well to consider seeding a small acreage to this crop. Manufacturers are sufficiently concerned with the present apparent shortage of flax seed to go to the extent of advertising throughout the West, urging farmers to sow flax this year. It is true that October flax is selling now around \$1.85 per bushel and that if this price holds flax can be grown profitably, but from the foregoing statement of Prof. Bracken's it will be plain that it is not advisable to sow flax on new breaking. Farmers have had a valuable object lesson during the past year, demonstrating the value of proper tillage methods being employed with a view to the storing up of every available particle of moisture, and it is not to be expected that a great deal of flax will be sown on land just newly broken when last year's failures from such treatment are fresh in the farmers' memory.

Sow in Spring Plowing

But flax sown on well prepared spring plowing ought to prove a paying crop this year with only an average yield. Clean seed is essential. One of the chief objections to flax growing is that it is very difficult to obtain seed which is entirely free from noxious weed seeds. Flax requires a firm, moist seed bed and should be sown just deep enough to reach the moisture. It is usual to seed from 20 to 30 pounds per acre. Seeding should be done as soon as all danger of frost is over and can be extended up to the middle of June. It is not considered good practice to sow much seed after the first of June, however. Under normal conditions it requires from 85 to 95 days for the crop to mature and, if sown in May, it is often ready to cut just about when the wheat is ripe. Yields range from 10 to 14 bushels to the acre on an average. It is now being claimed that Western flax straw, which formerly has been burned after the seed has been threshed from it, can be profitably treated for the production of fibre from which linen can be made. If this can be accomplished, with a normal yield, flax should give a good return if sown this year.