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THE CHOICE, CARE, TRANSPORT
AND
TRAINING OF HORSES
FOR THE
CANADIAN FIELD ARTILLERY

By VET. CAPT. E. C. THURSTON

3rd Brigade C.F.A.

1914

ISSUED BY THE
CANADIAN ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION

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IT can scarcely be gainsaid that the general efficiency of a battery or brigade of artillery depends in no small degree upon the manoeuvring, and even though officers, non-commissioned officers and gunners are practically letter perfect in their work, the whole may, and very often does become ineffective largely on account of ignorance, lack of training, or inability on the part of these same officers and of drivers, in that portion pertaining to horses.

If as much care and attention were devoted to riding and driving and general knowledge of horses and horsemanship, as is vouchsafed gunnery, a much more creditable showing would be made collectively and individually. This then is the only apology offered for setting down the following notes and suggestions, crude as they are, and being merely the consensus of experience gathered during a period covering some fifteen annual training camps, they are more particularly applicable to rural corps of Field Artillery, this being the branch of the service whence such was derived. For that reason the theme commences with the enrolling of horses prior to Camp and carries on through the period of training until such time as horses are returned to owners, the entire subject may be expressed thus, "Systemize the horse-end of your batteries just as carefully and consistently as the gunnery, making the one the auxiliary to the other."

TYPES OF HORSES.

For convenience these may be divided into two classes :

- (1) RIDING or SADDLE Horses, for use of officers and n.c.o.'s.
- (2) DRAUGHT HORSES, for guns, ammunition and service waggons.

In the first class, care should be taken to choose those of the lighter breeds best adapted to quick movement, having care that they are not too light or too heavy. Nothing looks worse or is more detrimental to the efficiency of a battery than to have an officer weighing 180 pounds or more mounted on a fourteen and a half hand pony, or a trumpeter of a hundred pounds riding a clumsy draught horse of fourteen or fifteen hundred weight. In choosing mounts, common sense is really the best guide, and in such choice the matter should be left to the officer or n.c.o. of the battery, whose experience along these lines makes him best qualified for the work.

In the second class, as far as possible, let your horses, particularly for the guns, be of uniform size and conformation. If it should so happen (and it nearly always does) that the range of size and weight varies, the better plan is to pick the larger or more clumsy animals for service and ammunition waggons, then the next in size and weight for wheel teams in the guns, leaving the lighter

or more trappy ones for lead drivers, as really upon these very largely depends the quick manoeuvring of the entire battery, they being rather more the guides than the motive power. In so far as possible, avoid putting mares in lead teams.

EXAMINATION OF HORSES.

There are many points to be considered and faults which should not be overlooked, particularly with regard to general adaptability for the purposes required.

First as to serviceable soundness, animals will be presented for enrollment having all the faults in the horse calendar which cannot be detected on examination. Briefly they are balkers, kickers, weavers, cribbers, wind suckers, those afflicted with staggers, ophthalmia, chronic indigestion, subject to colic, or mares with nymphomania (constantly in season when in harness or stable). To avoid such, the officer enrolling should require an affidavit from the owner certifying against these diseases. Age of animals is a matter of importance. Care should be taken to guard against enrolling any which are up in years, the principal reason being that such are more susceptible to ailments of the digestive system on account of poor teeth. By no means of least importance is the choosing of animals from sales stables. They may be, and very often are, stall-fed horses put up into "Sale condition" by a fattening process of molasses and linseed meal. They will probably be of good appearance and full of life when enrolled, but a few days at camp life, particularly if the weather be warm, will soon cause the superfluous fat to work off, and lacking hard muscular tissue, they will form a sorry lot both in usefulness and appearance. Better by far to choose horses which are hardened into work, who though they may not look quite so "trappy" in the marching-in state, will accomplish more and present a far better appearance during the training period, and on inspection day, than those of show-ring appearance at the start. For this reason it would be better to pick farmers' truckmen's or express horses, sacrificing a little on first appearance, though the enrollment of cheap truck-horses is not advocated.

As each animal is passed by the examining officer, a careful description should be taken somewhat along the lines of the following schedule. With the number burned on the near fore foot as a ready means of identification and comparison with the Descriptive Roll, a copy of the numbers as found in the battery should be kept by the Sergt.-Major and officers in charge of each sub-section. This will greatly facilitate matters in many instances which arise where quick identification is essential.

FORM OF DESCRIPTIVE ROLL.

DATE	NO.	COL. & SEX	AGE	MARKS	OWNER	REMARKS

CERTIFICATE OF EXAMINATION.

DATE,

I, _____ Examining Officer of _____ (Corps)
 certify that I have this day examined a _____ having the
 following marks: Age _____, Weight _____, Height _____, enrolled as
 _____ said to belong to
 _____ and

(Signed)

I, nominal owner of the above horse, certify the animal to be free from fault or vice which cannot be detected on examination.

(Signed)

The above form will require but a few moments to fill out and may be the means of preventing a great deal of trouble or misunderstanding later.

These forms should be kept in addition to the regular Descriptive Roll.

ENTRAINING.

Having chosen and enrolled the required number of animals, they should be picketed and left in charge of a reliable stable-picket, of not less than one man to each five horses, to feed, water and care for generally until such times as the corps is ready to move off to entrain, and in no case should animals be taken to the loading ramp platform or stock pen until the cars have all been prepared for their reception.

In choice of cars, experience has shown that the large Stock-car of the type used by the C.P.R. is superior to any other, not excepting the Palace Horse-car, this latter being suitable for race-horses or animals up to 1000 or 1100 pounds, but not adapted to the heavy 1300 to 1500 pound animals, the principal objection being the

small number which can be loaded in each car (except the "express" Horse-car), the difficulty of procuring cars, and the much greater expense.

In preparing the stock cars referred to, if they are not already supplied with such, a stout cleat of 2 x 4 should be securely fastened to each inside lateral wall, about half way between the floor and roof, to tie head ropes to. Carefully examine the inside of the cars to detect and remove any protruding nails or splinters of wood.

Before loading animals, remove the hind shoes and nail each horse's shoes to car wall above the head to avoid loss or confusion. Bandage each animal's tail for about eight or ten inches from the butt. This will prevent them becoming chafed or sore. For this purpose, strips of unbleached cotton two yards long and three or four inches wide will answer the purpose best. Being thus prepared, the animals should be loaded "head and tail" in each end of the car as far as the doors. By head and tail is meant, the first horse to be tied to one side of the car, the second with head tied to opposite side of the car, and so on to the doors. Put them in as closely together as possible, from eight to ten in each end, according to the size of the animals and length of car. Having got in as many as possible, fasten a piece of 2 x 4 across the car at either edge of the doors, with a brace between these at the centre, leaving the space between for the accommodation of the men in charge, as well as hay, buckets, lights, etc. Do not build individual stalls as it uses time and space, and is often a source of accident, as well as causing chafes on the flanks. Have at least two and not more than four men in charge of each car, and do not expect them to remain on duty more than eight or ten hours. All head ropes should be of good stout material. Do not trust to light "clothes lines," as is often done, and avoid chains or leather ties.

For lights, have one lantern of the type used by railway men, which in the event of emergency can be used to signal the locomotive driver. Have also a storage electric searchlight, such as carried by police officers, so that if occasion should arise where it is necessary to get in among the horses, there will be no danger from fire from an overturned or exploded lantern.

Absolutely prohibit smoking in cars.

Horses should be watered at least once in twelve to fifteen hours, fed only hay and plenty of it, which tends to keep them from getting restless.

Keep three or four buckets, or half a barrel, of water in each car as a protection in case of fire.

In tying horses in cars, use the quickly loosened knot known as the bowline.

Whilst en route the Farrier-Sergeant, or other reliable n.c.o.

(or best of all the veterinary officer), should act in the capacity of Superintendent of Transportation, his particular duty being at each station or watering tank, when time will permit, to visit all cars of live stock under his care, and make certain as to the comfort of both men and horses, the picket in charge being changed every eight or ten hours. It is surprising the good feeling which will be created by an occasional visit from such officer with a cheerful greeting of "Well, boys, how are they riding?" On the other hand, if such is neglected, the men in charge are very liable to pass comment on the comfort of their comrades in the passenger coaches. The above is a general plan which, if carried out, will be found by far the most satisfactory for shipment either short or long distances, and which has been followed for a dozen years with a clean record of not a single accident or death.

The precautions as cited in the foregoing pages may seem superfluous, but it will be found much easier to carry out the work by adopting a few fixed rules, modified or changed in minor details to suit existing conditions, than to endeavour to use methods lacking system, which invariably end in loss of time and temper, with the accompanying chaos and dissatisfaction.

Last but not least in the interest of the Train Despatcher's schedule, have the entire transport loaded and comfortably settled for the journey at least 15 or 20 minutes previous to the time set for departure. Better this than to disarrange railway schedules.

DETRAINING.

On arrival at destination, much the same systematic methods of unloading should be followed, being particular that a fresh picket of men is detained for the detraining and care of horses, and not permitting any to "move off" until all are out of the cars. Whether cars are to be detained at Camp grounds during the training period, or not, they should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected immediately. Should they not remain, *all studding cleats, etc., should be removed* and carefully stored in charge of the Q.M.S., as they will be required for the return journey.

FIRST THREE HOURS IN CAMP.

Too much stress cannot be laid upon the importance of this period, as the success or failure of the entire camp may depend on the care or oversight of little matters at this time. Illustrative of this a few incidents may be noted.

(1) A driver wants to get a plug of tobacco, he carelessly ties three horses to a fence rail during his momentary absence, the horses stampede and are lost for several days, causing endless worry during that time, and furnishing an excuse for a search party to spend their time scouring the country for lost horses.

(2) A horse is slightly lame coming into camp, the case is not reported to V.O. or Farrier-Sergt. for 24 to 36 hours, the driver in *his* wisdom calling it car-stiffness, and when finally brought to notice, examination discloses a nail in the foot—result, a disabled and useless animal for the entire camp.

(3) A driver takes horses to brook of ice-cold spring water, lets them drink their fill, result, a case of colic lasting several hours at a time when least desired, and another “foundered” animal whose case comes up before the Horse Board of Enquiry with claim from owner for indemnity.

The above are but a few cases, not suppositious, but of actual experience, a dozen others could be mentioned but these will suffice as indicative of what care should be exercised.

If horses are to be picketed out the picket lines should have been set by the advance party; if to be stabled, each battery or brigade section of stabling should have been prepared by the same party. There is just as much discomfort for horses arriving at the Camp ground with no preparations made for them as there would be for an officer and men arriving under like conditions, the only difference being that the quadrupeds are unable to express their sentiments quite as forcibly as the bipeds would under the circumstances.

Have roll call of all horses by number, and any injury, accident or sickness reported at once, such case or cases to be immediately checked out onto sick-list and placed on separate picket-line or separate section of stables, this portion of picket or stables to constitute the Hospital Section, under direct charge of the V.O., Farrier Sergt. and hospital assistants of the required number.

As soon as horses are quartered give rations of hay, followed in about twenty minutes with water. When all have been watered, feed grain.

For stable duty at night the usual course of assigning a new guard or picket each twenty-four hours should be carried out.

Assuming that arrival in Camp has been during the day time (and arrangements should, if possible, be made to that end) it should be the duty of the Q.M.S. and the Sergt.-Major to issue and fit harness, if this has not already been done prior to leaving battery headquarters, the Farrier-Sergt. and shoeing smiths to shoe horses, in fact all preliminary arrangements should be completed so that when the “Fall in” blows for the first parade, there will not be the general mix-up and waste of time so often experienced, not only before this particular parade, but for several days.

ON PARADE.

The V. O. and Farrier-Sergt. accompanying the battery on parade taking very particular note as to how the different horses, both saddle and draught, are suitable for the work assigned them, and by suggesting to the commanding officer a few changes comfortable with such, should after the second or third parade have the whole working in unison. Having gotten them to this stage, the principal thing to avoid is constantly changing horses from one position to another. The officer commanding battery is responsible for this. The veterinary officer may advise him only.

AFTER PARADE.

After returning to the picket-lines or stables, drivers should loosen girths two or three holes, lifting saddles from backs and collars from breast or shoulders for an instant, then allowing saddlery and harness to remain on for about ten minutes till animals become somewhat cool, when they may be stripped and rubbed dry with wisps of straw, hay, or rub rags, after which they should be groomed. This will materially lessen the liability to saddle or collar galls. If the least chafe or abrasion of the skin is noticed it should be attended to immediately by washing clean with a 5 per cent. solution of creolin, then applying a powder consisting of Zinc Oxide and boric acid each two parts and powdered charcoal one part, which will in many cases heal the part in a few hours. Greasy ointments, gall cures, or lotions are worse than useless. Any ointment simply gums the hair surrounding the chafe and tends to gather sand, dust or hayseed, making matters worse. With regard to lotions or liniments, their curative power does not last as long as it takes to apply them, and to be effective must be of such an astringent nature as to "pucker" the skin, causing it to become hard and calloused, often resulting in permanent small tumors.

If collars, saddles or girths are found to chafe, rub the portion of the leather causing the chafe with plumbago or ordinary stove polish. This will form a smooth surface, preventing the chafing. By all means avoid the use of sweat-pads to remedy ill-fitting harness. See to it that the harness fits in the first instance. A careful inspection of all horses should be made by the V.O. or Farrier-Sergt. after each parade for chafes, gall, injuries or sickness, this to be insisted upon, as very often through ignorance or carelessness, drivers do not report what might appear to be something unworthy of notice, but resulting seriously from neglect.

After horses have been thoroughly dried and cleaned have them paraded for water *at a walk*. When returned to lines or stables, carry on in the usual way with hay ration, then grain.

All parades of horses such as entraining, detraining, roll-call,

watering, etc., should be done in an orderly, uniform manner under direction of an officer or n.c.o. whose authority shall be absolute in preventing the useless hurrying and crowding so often indulged in. As a last admonition in this paragraph, do not permit men to take horses for "joy rides" after parade, in the evening, or on Sundays, even though nominally owned by such men. They should be given to understand that in Camp the animals for the time being are the property of the Government. In so far as drivers are concerned, a good plan for their schooling or education in riding and driving is to have the Sergt.-Instructor, who is usually sent to Battalion headquarters for a couple of weeks previous to Camp, give instructions in this branch as well as in gunnery. Glancing over the reports of competitions for several years it will be noted that the greatest deficiency appears in riding and driving. More points are lost on account of such incompetence than any other individual cause; guns being put out of action through stupidity or ignorance, and one certainly is not moved to ecstasy witnessing a lot of men mounted on horses, their hands on a level with the horses' ears, bobbing up and down like sacks of meal with nothing but the grace of Providence and their own jack spurs holding them on.

VETERINARY LECTURES.

A portion of the syllabus of Training Camps which often is overlooked or totally disregarded is that of lectures by the V.O. This subject need not here be dealt with in detail as it is a matter for the V.O. of each battery or brigade to choose his own plan of work by which the best results may be accomplished.

As a suggestion, a very good course to follow and one which from experience has been found to work out best, is to assemble for an hour after afternoon parade, or in the evening, all n.c.o.'s, drivers, stable pickets, etc., whose duties bring them in close touch with the horses. Choose a comfortable spot where the men may sit around on the ground, having the lectures divided into a series covering the entire work at Camp, as well as simple instruction in Veterinary Science useful to the men, not only as militiamen but as civilians, those lectures largely to include first aid principles.

Choose a horse from the lines with which to demonstrate the rudiments of Anatomy and Physiology, Practice of Medicine, bandaging, control, etc., using language free from all technical terms. If carried out in this manner the lectures will prove of great benefit to officers as well as men, once their interest is established, provided the lectures are more in the form of friendly discussions or debates rather than dry discourses. Let there be questions asked and answered, in fact encourage such, even if they seem simple, and it will be found that the good results will far exceed expectations, though for a day or two some may seem skep-

tical. Cases from the Hospital Line should also be used for demonstrations in Surgical or Medical treatment.

HOSPITAL LINE.

This consists of a separate picket line or stables set apart as a hospital section, and itself divided, to isolate any patients suffering from infectious or contagious diseases from those not so affected. This should be under the direct control of the V.O. with the Farrier-Sergt. and required number of assistants dependent on the number of animals off duty deemed unfit for work.

A carefully prepared Daily Sick Report should be made out in triplicate each morning giving detail of regimental number, description of animal, disease or disability, one copy to be retained by the V.O., one copy by the O.C. and one to be sent to Camp headquarters or P.V.O. of the Camp. This will prevent misunderstanding or dispute in all matters relating to pay, boards of inquiry, indemnity, etc.

Within twelve hours of breaking Camp, a "Board" should be convened and all claims dealt with as laid down in K. R. and O. with a Marching Out state prepared in triplicate and fyled with the Daily Sick Reports as above noted.

Entraining after Camp, careenroute, detraining at Headquarters etc. should be carried out on the same lines as suggested.

After roll-call at local headquarters, owners of horses should be required to sign a release of claim for pay or indemnity, thus avoiding subsequent claims which might be made. The foregoing is but a synopsis which may be elaborated upon by officer or officers whose duty it is to have charge of this important branch of a training Camp.