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The Dairyman's Best Crop

By H. L. Blanchard

IN casting about for an agricultural, state-wide, timely topic, the writer cannot but believe that the topic relating to the rearing of heifer calves heads the list. This crop has for many years been very greatly neglected by the dairymen of the state, for which neglect not only are the dairymen and farmers in general now paying the penalty in being compelled to send abroad for the cows that are needed to maintain their herds, and paying therefor high prices, but the agricultural interests of the entire state are feeling the effects of the wholesale slaughter of the heifer calves that has been going on for many years. Of all the mistakes that have been made by our dairymen and all others who have been interesting themselves in the work of developing the dairy interests of the state, the neglect to produce and develop heifer calves, and particularly dairy heifer calves, amounts to nothing less than one egregious blunder. It has been clearly demonstrated that the very general slaughter of the heifer calves, regardless of their quality for dairy purposes, has not only been a sin but a very unbusinesslike practice. In the writer's opinion, there is little hope of success in any efforts that our dairymen of the state may put forth in the matter of eradicating the diseases, abortion and tuberculosis, so long as we continue to import cows from any and all parts of the country. When our heifer calves are raised upon milk that is produced by healthy cows only then and not till then may we be hopeful of reducing the prevalence of tuberculosis to the minimum within our state. So little attention is being given to the raising of heifer calves by our dairymen that the writer feels safe in saying that there are not one-half dozen dairymen in the Northwest, who from their own knowledge know the cost of raising a heifer calf to producing age. In explanation as to how this unfortunate condition happened it is but fair to say that only a few years ago cows could be bought and sold for about what it now costs to raise them. At the present time, however, a desirable cow will cost about three times as much as it costs to raise a heifer to producing age, if not more.

What is the cost of raising the heifer? Assuming the herd to comprise 15 or 20 cows and the head of the herd—the sire—it would, we think, be fair to make the initial cost of the calf when born \$5. And further assuming that the better practice in raising calves be followed, that of liberal feeding instead of permitting them to very largely shift for themselves after a few weeks of age, it would require approximately the following feeds to raise the calf to six months old:

350 lbs. whole milk @ \$1.50 per cwt	\$5.25
2,000 lbs. skim milk @ 25c per cwt	7.50
100 lbs. of hay @ 50c per cwt	.50
100 lbs. grain	1.50
90 days pasture	1.50
Total	\$16.25

The calf at six months of age, and weaned, will have cost for feed \$16.25 which, added to the initial cost, \$5.00, equals \$21.25.

Assuming that the calf freshens in

the fall at 28 months of age the following additional charges for feed will be necessary before she becomes a producer, viz:

6 mos. pasturage @ 50c	\$3.00
10 mos. pasture @ \$1.00	10.00
700 lbs. grain @ \$1.50 per cwt	10.50
1/2 ton hay	5.00
2 tons succulent feed	5.00

Total \$33.50
\$33.50 plus \$21.25 equals \$54.75—the total feed cost of the heifer at 28 months of age, and all the feed charged up may be produced on the farm, since oats may be grown on practically every farm in the state and there is no grain that is superior to oats for the growing calf. The grade heifer at producing age is worth from \$60 to \$100, and thus we have an ample margin of profit to cover any legitimate labor charge, and the manure will adequately compensate for any legitimate interest and depreciation charges.

It will be readily noticed that the farmer will need to seek a long time to find a better market for his crops and his labor than by feeding the home grown crops on the farm, in the rearing of vigorous and healthy heifers to replenish his herd and to sell to his neighbors.

Again, if the grade of dairy cows is to be improved, it must be accomplished through raising the heifer out of the best producing cows and sired by a good pure bred sire and not through buying the cows that other states and sections have to sell.

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