

Dairy Cow Selection

By C. O. Levine.

THERE are four main things to consider in selecting a dairy cow. They are the production, breeding and type of the cow and the question as to whether the cow is free from disease.

The production question is of vital importance to anyone intending to make a financial success of dairying. Today successful dairymen keep production records of all their cows by the use of the Babcock tester and a scales. Never keep or buy a cow with a low production record attached to her, no matter how good her breeding may be. As long as she is in the herd she will lose money for the owner, and no matter how good a bull she is mated to, her offspring will resemble her in the matter of production. A cow must produce three hundred pounds of butter-fat in one year to bring in a profit above the cost of her feed and care. If such a cow be of good breeding and is mated to a bull of good ancestry and type, at least seventy-five per cent of her offspring should be in or above the three hundred pound production class.

It is very important to know the production records of the parents and grandparents of the cow, because of the fact that the tendency of cows to produce milk is to a large extent hereditary. It is of special importance to have this knowledge in regard to heifers, which, of course, have no records of their own. In itself, a pedigree of a pure-bred animal is of no more importance than the pedigree of a scrub. It is what the pedigree tells about the ancestors that is of importance. For a cow to have a good pedigree, her ancestors on both her dam's and sire's side, for two or three generations back should be good producers.

General Appearance.

In general a cow should have a lean, angular appearance. Her chest should be deep and her barrel large and roomy. This indicates a strong constitution, good dairy temperament and a large capacity for feed which will be converted into milk rather than into body fat. A soft, pliable hide indicates good internal secretion and good digestion. A large, well placed udder, with numerous and prominent milk veins, extending well forward on the abdomen, provide large space and room for the manufacture of milk. A good producing cow will answer favorably to this general description of the ideal dairy type. In building up a herd it is impossible to give too much attention to type.

Tuberculosis and contagious abortion are the main diseases common in dairy herds. After the breeding, production record and type of the cow have received our attention, it is important for us to know whether or not the cow is free from these diseases. Before any cow is purchased she should be tested for tuberculosis by a reliable veterinarian. If she reacts to the test, showing that she has the disease germs in her system, she should be rejected. A dairy herd should be tested once every year for tuberculosis, in order that the disease may not get a good start in the herd before it is discovered.

It is more difficult to guard against contagious abortion. It is not enough that the owner says the cow does not have the disease, for it is a regrettable fact that all dairymen are not absolutely honest. The best test is to find out when the cow last calved. If she has a living calf born within the past year, and if other cows in the herd from which she is selected have living calves born within the past few months, it is safe to conclude that the cow is free from this disease.

From the production standpoint, proper selection of the individual cow is the chief element of success in dairying. There is greater variation in the production of individual cows of the same breed, than there is among the average production of the different dairy breeds themselves. Anyone who has had anything to do with dairying is well acquainted with this fact.

Tendency to Revert.

Centuries ago, when the cow was kept mainly for her beef and hide

alone, she produced only enough milk to nourish the calf until it was old enough to eat grass. She probably produced on the average a gallon of milk per day for a period of three or four months. The highly developed cow of today is to a large extent artificial. By continual selection, generation after generation, of the best milkers for breeding stock, the milking functions of the cow have been improved to the present high degree. Experienced breeders are well acquainted with the fact that acquired characters are not regularly transmitted from the parent to the offspring. Hence the reason for the wide variation in the capacity for production among different cows even of the same breeding.

As it is the tendency for all animals to transmit the characters normal to the breed which they represent, it is evident that not all of the progeny of a good producing cow will be equal to, or better than the dam in the matter of production. We can, however, by careful selection and weeding out, build up a high producing herd, and the tendency to revert to the low producing ancestors will lessen as the milking habit becomes more firmly fixed in the cows.

Last year nearly 100,000 boys in 11 Southern states, each raised one acre of corn. In the same states more than 33,000 girls each raised and canned one-fourth acre of tomatoes. This is a big showing for the work of the government in encouraging and organizing corn growing and tomato canning clubs through the South.

Farmers near Pendleton, Oregon, report wheat running close to 50 bushels per acre.

HIDES

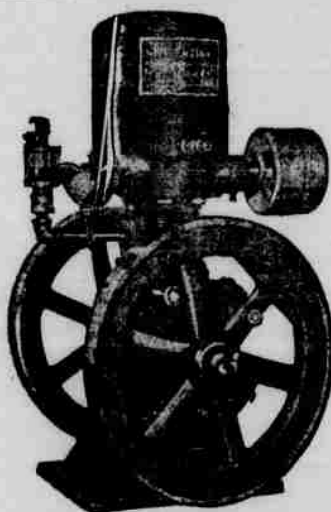
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