

MINISTER CONGRATULATES K. BOSWELL

Agriculture Minister Andrew MacRae, left, congratulates Keith Boswell on his strong wins. Mr. MacRae phoned the Guardian the night Lealand Royal Margaret won the grand championship at the Royal Winter Fair last year, to make sure this paper had the outstanding news.

Crossbreeding is beneficial

A five percent increase in calf crop, 40 to 80 pounds improvement in weaning weights, harder cows, better mothering ability, freedom from snowburned udders and pinkeys, maintenance of size in the herd, with no sacrifice in conformation and carcass quality; these are among the benefits that have brought some of Canada's top ranchers to adopt planned crossbreeding.

The emphasis in such a breeding program is on the "control." It's not just a matter of crossing any kind of a bull on the herd. A number of outstanding Alberta ranchers are the leaders in this work and have some significant results to show for their efforts. One of them, George Ross, is even in the process of developing a new breed, by crossing dairy-type bulls on his Hereford Shorthorn cows.

On the whole, the 1963 progeny tests at the privately operated Beef Testing Station, Bassano, Alberta, showed that the crossbreds performed right up with the straightbreds, and in some instances, even surpassed them.

Many of the straightbred groups were sired by very good performers, tested bulls and were bred to what were considered the best cows in the respective herds, yet the best such matings could produce came out second best in comparison with calves into which the high octave of hybrid vigor had been bred. In comparing the carcasses, it was found that all crossbred groups had more lean and less external fat than the straightbreds. This was especially true of those with Charolais breeding.

George Ross, confided that "crossbreeding is the cheapest

way I know to maintain size and weight in the herd. Our bulls cost us around \$350 per head. If we tried to run a straightbred herd and maintain the kind of size we like in our replacement heifers, we couldn't find the kind of bulls we'd need for \$1,000 a head. We can't buy our bulls out of sales either. If a bull has ever had grain in him he goes to pieces right away, the way we handle him here."

"The average cattleman," Ross continued, "is not taking advantage of crossbreeding. In the future, the producer who stays with the straightbreds will have to be a specialist in the selection of bulls, in culling the herd and in marketing his product. On the other hand, the cattleman who selects two high-producing breeds and crosses them will stay in the high-production bracket with less effort and less expense, and his product will find almost the same market as the straightbred herd."

This does not mean that purebred cattle are headed for oblivion. Without purebreds there can be no crossbreeding. And crossbreeding is conceded by all who have had anything to do with it to demand just as much care and selection as a good purebred program. "Crossbreeding in itself will not promote outstanding performance automatically," one of the Canadian researchers has pointed out. "Nor will the indiscriminate crossing of breed and types. But a wide cross planned for specific reasons, and in which high-performing animals are used and careful selection is practiced, can result in real advantages for the commercial cattleman interested in more efficient production."

Brucellosis control program announced

OTTAWA — With substantial progress made in the federal program to eradicate brucellosis from Canada's 12 million cattle, both dairy and beef, new regulations have come into effect based on experience gained over several years of operations.

One of the changes is a reduction of the period for vaccination — from 4 to 11 months of age to 4 to 9 months.

Another is the lowering from 30 months to 30 of the age limit to commence compulsory blood testing of vaccinates (animals that have been vaccinated).

The changes are designed to make the eradication program more effective. As this goal comes nearer there will be less emphasis on the calfhood vaccination part of it because vaccination is regarded as a control and not as an eradication measure.

A Health of Animals official said vaccination does not give 100 per cent immunity from brucellosis, or Bangs Disease as it is sometimes called. Also vaccination can sometimes mask diagnosis of a subsequent actual infection.

The new age limits are expected to reduce this interference of the vaccine which sometimes occurs when vaccinated animals are being blood tested for brucellosis.

The regulations also provide a new designation "brucellosis free" for areas having the greatest freedom from brucel-

losis—not more than one per cent of herds and not more than 0.2 per cent of all cattle being infected in the area. This is the third and final stage in eradication, progressing from "brucellosis control" and "brucellosis certified" areas. The last-named, representing the best stage of eradication before the new regulations were introduced in February last, called for a disease incidence of no more than 5 per cent of herds and one percent of cattle.

At last report in February 635 of Canada's 725 areas had attained brucellosis-certified status.

Another innovation in the regulations is the exclusive of male calves from official vaccination status under the calfhood vaccination program. It is felt that vaccination at calfhood could adversely affect a bull's fertility.

Blood tests of bulls are made at any time after eight months as with other unvaccinated cattle.

Diagnosing leucosis

Efforts of CDA researchers are being aimed at curbing avian leucosis, a group of diseases which causes heavy loss-

es in the poultry industry. Leucosis accounts for more than half the deaths in laying trials in Canada and about one in five of poultry carcass condemnations at federally inspected packing plants is attributed to this disease. In 1963 leucosis was given as the reason for 224,300 condemnations.

At the Lethbridge laboratory of the Animal Pathology Division of Health of Animals Branch, scientists are studying an acute form of leucosis in which the disease can develop in nine days as against 100 days for common leucosis.

Biochemical changes which occur in chickens infected with acute leucosis have been studied with the hope that some practical benefits to poultry producers will result.

In the United States tests for leucosis have been developed in tissue culture. These are based

on the presence in certain chicken embryos of the RIF virus which is related to leucosis virus. These are difficult laboratory techniques and their practical application have yet to be determined. It is too early to say whether these diagnostic tests will lead to control of leucosis in the field but they do add to scientific knowledge on the subject and may lead to more effective and earlier diagnosis of leucosis.

Burning lowbush blueberries

Farmers pruning lowbush blueberries by burning should do it before May 15, says Ivan

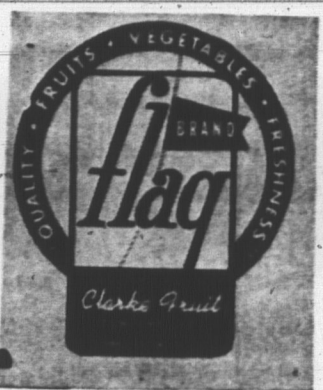
Hall, of the CDA's Research Station at Nappan, N.S. Early burning produces taller, more vigorous blueberry shoots while late burning results in plants developing few, if any, flower buds and thus no crop the next year, explains Dr. Hall. Burning early when there is still snow in the woods surrounding blueberry fields also reduces the first fire hazard.

Two methods are used to burn-prune blueberries: 1. On rough ground straw or hay is spread at the rate of one ton per acre in the fall and then burned the next spring. (This is expensive in both materials and labor.) 2. In many areas, pruning is now done with burners using stove or furnace oil.

Charles Rose, Dresden Mills, Maine, has designed a low pressure gas burner for pruning the lowbush blueberry, which may lower the cost of production considerably, says Dr. Hall.

The researcher quotes Mr. Rose as reporting that he burned a 12-acre field on January 29 for \$6.80 an acre. He believes that later burning in the spring would cut this cost by \$2.00. In Maine it takes roughly a 100 gallon cylinder to burn an acre. This costs \$4.25. In Canada propane is expected to cost slightly more.

Besides its lower initial cost and maneuverability, the low pressure gas burner only requires one man to operate it compared with two for the old oil burner. The parts of this machine are very light.



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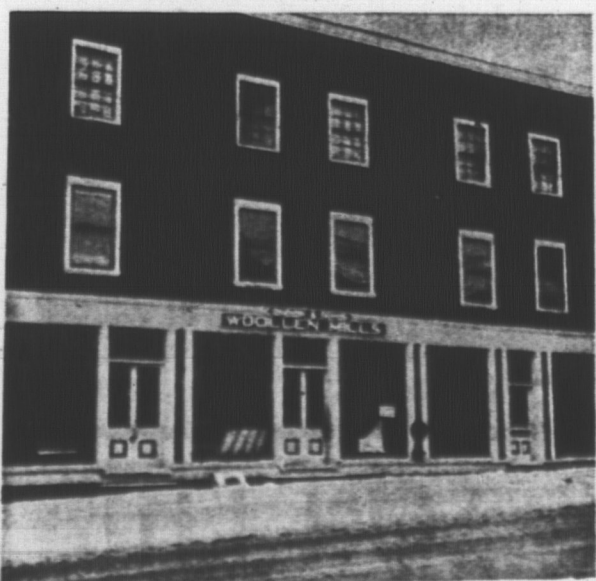
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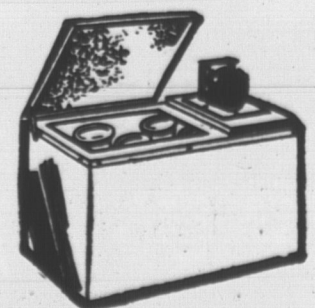
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