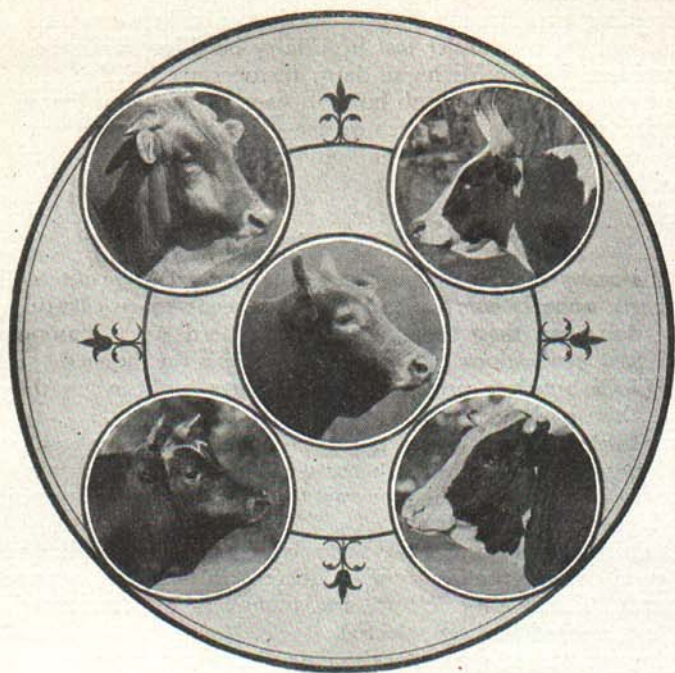


BETTER BULLS INCREASE DAIRY PROFITS

By A. C. BALTZER
Dairy Extension Specialist



Michigan has about 830,000 dairy cows on approximately 150,000 farms, or about five or six cows per farm. These figures show that the average dairy herd in Michigan is a small one.

Only a small per cent, perhaps four or five, of all Michigan cows are purebred. This small number of purebred cows produce most of the purebred sires used by Michigan dairymen. No exact figure can be given regarding the number of purebred dairy sires in use on Michigan farms or

Michigan State College

Extension Division

R. J. Baldwin, Director, East Lansing

Printed and distributed in furtherance of the purposes of the co-operative agricultural extension work provided for in the Act of Congress, May 8, 1914. Michigan State College and U. S. Department of Agriculture co-operating.

what per cent of all cows in Michigan are bred to purebred sires. Census figures show that probably more than 60 per cent of all dairy bulls on farms in Michigan are other than purebred.

It is estimated that the average milk and butterfat production of Michigan cows has increased from 4,000 pounds milk and 150 pounds butterfat in 1920 to at least 5,000 pounds milk and 185 pounds butterfat for the current year. Nearly 20,000 cows tested in Michigan dairy herd improvement associations in 1928 averaged 8,006 pounds milk and 318 pounds butterfat. Figures from Michigan dairy herd improvement associations show that more than 92 per cent of the 20,000 cows under test in these associations are being bred to purebred sires.

Better breeding explains the differences that exist between the average cow in Michigan and the cow under test in a dairy herd improvement association. The real problems before Michigan dairy farmers are briefly:

1. Too many grade and scrub bulls in use on Michigan farms.
2. Too few purebred dairy sires in use—less than 40 per cent.
3. Low average production of milk and butterfat per cow.
4. Small size of herd.

Get Rid of Scrub and Grade Bulls

Among the many factors that influence the amount of profit realized from the dairy herd, none is more important and needs more careful consideration by the dairyman than the selection of a herd sire. Famous livestock breeders of past generations placed great emphasis on the sire. The success of these famous breeders proved that they were right when they said the sire is more than half the herd.

Everyone takes pride in good livestock. Good bulls help the dairyman get good livestock. Better bulls increase the profits of the dairy herd just as much so as improved feeding or careful culling of poor producing cows will bring bigger dairy returns.

Where a dairy herd is found making a large amount of milk and butterfat and, also, good profits, the keystone of success in dairying, a **purebred bull** will be found. Hence time, effort, and money is well expended when the right bull, a purebred bull, is selected.

Where the sire which is used in the dairy herd is carelessly selected, there will be found the tombstone which marks the ruin of dairying, a poor bull. No one takes pride in the ownership of poor bulls because both the get and the bull himself are undesirable. Most poor bulls are grade or scrub bulls which do not materially improve the profit making ability of a herd. Because the breeding of a grade or scrub bull is mixed, his get are also of mixed breeding. Such offspring produce poorly, they almost always lack type, and they sell for less on the market. Grade and scrub bulls are always expensive to use, even though the original cost is little or nothing. Leading livestock men have said that if the sire is more than half the herd, a grade or scrub sire is all the herd.

Michigan Needs to Get Rid of Scrub and Grade Bulls

What Is A Better Dairy Bull

Records from the Bureau of Dairying, U. S. D. A., show that 260 scrub cows produced 4,695 pounds milk and 179 pounds butterfat. Daughters

from these cows sired by purebred bulls averaged 7,607 pounds milk and 300 pounds butterfat. How much is 121 pounds butterfat worth? At 50 cents per pound, this would mean \$60.50 difference in returns per cow due to better breeding. It pays to use a better bred sire, a **purebred dairy sire**.

All better bulls of the dairy breeds are purebred bulls that come from known ancestors and whose dams and granddams should have records of milk and butterfat production. There are many purebred bulls that come from cows which have not been tested for production. Such bulls should be avoided because papers of registry are not a guarantee of production. A purebred dairy bull may have a dam that is an ordinary producer. Thus, not every purebred bull is a better bull. A purebred bull and especially one from an untested dam may fail to have the inheritance to improve the production of the daughters that he sires. This is especially true when cows of outstanding ability and type are the dams.

When grade or scrub cows are kept, it is best to breed them to purebred sires and raise the heifers that are dropped. The majority of livestock owners are not immediately able to buy a herd of purebred females with good type and production records. When this is the case, the next best thing to do is buy a well bred bull. Such bulls with record dams are available at reasonable prices. Such a bull influences the ability of all calves that he sires to produce profitably and possesses the ability to pass on to his get the desirable traits of better milk and butterfat production and better type because his blood comes from ancestors which were known for their ability to produce better stock. Through him the value of the whole herd and its ability to return greater profits can be quickly increased.

Better dairy bulls will help Michigan dairymen get:

1. Increased production of milk and butterfat and more profits.
2. Cows of better type.
3. Cows that are worth more for sale on the market.
4. Greater pride in ownership of a better herd.
5. A better market for feeds grown on farm and fed to more efficient cows.

What Breed To Select

Many farmers who have never owned a purebred bull are at a loss to know which breed to select. Discussions about the merits or good points of a breed by a breed booster and the demerits or poor points of other breeds usually brought out by such a breed booster have caused confusion about what breed to select. It has created the feeling that there must be something wrong with the purebred and that perhaps the grade or scrub may not be so bad after all. The point is, the purebred bull of any of our established breeds, is much superior to any grade or scrub bull. Purebred bulls should be used by all farmers while the grade and scrub bull should be outlawed for all time.

Several points should be considered when choosing a breed:

1. Personal preference.
2. What breed is the most numerous in the neighborhood.
3. What are the market demands.
4. How is the location, soil, climate, and equipment adapted to the breed.

How Much Does A Better Bull Cost

A purebred bull is cheap at any price, when the results are considered. Users of purebred bulls are satisfied on this point. Small herds are common throughout Michigan. Such herd owners often feel that they cannot afford to pay the money asked for a good bull because the cost of service per cow for a small herd is so much greater than the cost in a large herd. This problem is solved when the small herd owner or the dairyman just getting started will join up with two or three neighbors and own a bull co-operatively. This is known as a bull club.

The Bull Club

1. The two, three, or four farmers who agree to co-operate in the ownership and use of the sire should agree on the breed to be used.
2. Arrange about the price to be paid and who shall select him.
3. Arrange to keep the bull at some farm centrally located.
4. Prorate the purchase price of the bull among the bull club members in proportion to the number of cows owned by each farmer.
5. Prorate the feed cost and upkeep of the bull for the year in the same manner.
6. It is recommended that a bull pen and safety breeding chute be built to house the bull.
7. If two or more bull clubs are formed in different communities, the bull can be exchanged between the groups at the end of two years to avoid inbreeding. Each group with an investment in only one bull, will thereby insure four years of constructive dairy breeding for two groups or six years for three groups. The cost for each group is materially lessened.

The Value Of A Bull Club

Bull clubs will help Michigan dairymen accomplish the following results :

1. Get rid of the grade and scrub bull, the source of enormous loss to dairymen.
2. Increase the average production and profits per cow by getting better bred cows.
3. Decrease the service fee cost of using outstanding sires.
4. Numerous good sires of one breed will insure community development of a breed. Such development creates a ready market for the sale of any surplus dairy livestock.

Better bulls offer the opportunity to every Michigan dairyman to increase the profits from his dairy herd. Talk to the neighbors about co-operating in the purchase of a better bull. Talk to your county agricultural agent about getting a purebred sire. Also write to the dairy department, Michigan State College, describing the kind of a bull you want and ask for the latest list of available bulls owned by reliable Michigan breeders.