

# The Improvement Of Cattle Breeds In France

By J. G. Fevrier

Cattle is by far the most important form of livestock in France. While in sheep there has been a marked improvement in quality during recent years, they have for almost a century shown a considerable deterioration as regards quantity, chiefly owing to the fact that improvements in farming methods are continually reducing the acres of fallow and pasture land and that it is becoming more and more difficult to find shepherds. As regards horse-breeding that is also on the decline on account of increased motorization. On the other hand, while the ox is being used less frequently as a draught animal, its importance is growing as a meat-producing animal owing to the rise in the standard of living. As regards milch cows, milk either as such or in the form of butter or cheese is assuming an ever greater place in French diet. The traffic has also tended to increase the demand for meat and dairy produce.

The cattle herd now amounts to some sixteen million head in France. Milch cows account for about half; the remainder comprises young animals, draught animals, bulls and cattle reared for fattening or too old for work.

### Six Main Breeds

While about thirty breeds of cattle exist in France, the greater part of stock is formed of six main breeds and their interbreeding. For meat production there are the Charelais and the Limousin breeds, and for milk production the Norman, the Red Piebald (Pie Rouge), Black Piebald (Pie Noir) and Dutch breeds. The Charelais breed accounts for some 1,400,000 head and the Limousin breed 685,000 head. The Norman has reached 3 million head and the Eastern red piebald breed one million. In 1949 total milk production amounted to 130 hectolitres for 7,800,000 head. That is to say an animal yield of 17.4 litres per cow.

What effort is being made to improve these breeds? One should be quite clear in the first place as to what is meant by the word, "improvement." At first sight it would seem advisable to retain the breeds producing the most meat or milk. But in a country as diverse as France one is obliged to take local conditions into account: terrain, feeding stuffs and height which often come down in favour of hardy, resistant breeds more adaptable to environment. Great work has been done, nevertheless, in that direction. Then, without any given breed, a selection must be made and those individuals retained which possess the qualities of the breed to the highest degree.

### Herd Books

The Ministry of Agriculture is subsidizing associations that keep herd books. These books contain on the one hand a list of animals conforming to the standards of the breed, but of unknown ancestry, and on the other animals with an ancestry inscribed in herd books, providing of course, that they themselves conform to the standard. The "book is closed" after a few generations, that is to say registration is made only of the offspring of animals already inscribed. Since 1947 account has been taken not only of the physical characteristics of the individual but of its capacity, for example, in the case of a cow, its milk yield.

From this last point of view a milk inspection system has been set up. This consists in determining as accurately as possible the milk production of a cow during the whole period of lactation, as well as the amount of butter that

can be made from this milk. Only with a system of this kind can any rational and effective selection of dairy cattle be made.

It has long been recognized that in cattle breeds the bull plays a preponderant part in the transmission of qualities. In particular, milk-producing qualities are handed down by the male rather than the female. Furthermore, the bull transmits its quality more offspring than the cow. That explains why breeding syndicates have been instituted for the purpose of maintaining, with expenses shared, a pedigree sire. That accounts too for the Act dated September 16th, 1943, subjecting the utilization of bulls to an authorization delivered by a Vigilance Commission. This is to prevent any formation of half-breed herds issuing from males devoid of useful qualities.

### Artificial Insemination

Artificial insemination is of the greatest interest with regard to cattle because, as we have already pointed out, good features are transmitted predominantly by the male. In addition, considerably more offspring can be obtained from a good sire. It is hardly necessary to add that official control is particularly important in this field. Therefore the Acts of May 16th, 1948, and March 27th, 1948, have set up the constitution and organization of artificial insemination centres.

Cattle shows, which are extremely popular in France, have changed considerably during recent years. Formerly the conformation of the animal only was regarded. In the future, its capacities will also be taken into account. This new method of discrimination has already been applied to dairy cattle — at the general agricultural show in 1951.

There remains the great problem of reducing the number of cattle breeds. We have already indicated that caution will have to be exercised in this process. In actual fact, it is not only a question of eliminating some inferior breeds, but also — and perhaps most of all — fighting against the spread of half-breeds. It will be impossible of course to prohibit the raising of certain breeds and their half-breeds; but there is a tendency towards the cutting of all state aid to their breeders. Thus, as regards breeds put as it



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As General Eisenhower reportedly was asking President Truman to speed up arms shipments to Western Europe, there was pictorial evidence that much has already been done to bolster Europe's defense with American arms. Above at Istanbul, Turkey, Turkish troops, parade past a reviewing stand during celebration of the Turkish republic's 28th anniversary. Since 1948, Turkey has received about \$700,000,000 in U.S. military aid to reinforce her position as the keystone of Near East defense against Red aggression. At Norfolk, Va., right, U. S. Sabre jets are loaded on the Royal Canadian aircraft carrier Magnificent. Jets will be used by Canadian pilots in England.



were on the Index, the Ministry of Agriculture has decided to hold no special shows for them, to stop subsidizing associations keeping herd-books for these breeds, and to prohibit artificial insemination

in the case of bulls belonging to these breeds. The results of this policy cannot be known for some time. But those already obtained, in Metropolitan France and in overseas

territories, with a view to improving the quality of sheep, encourage one to hope that the same will be true for cattle, which have a far more important place in French economy.

## Opening of Film Showing Stopped

MONTREAL, Nov. 12 —(CP)—A man who served five years of a life sentence for the slaying of his nine-year-old daughter 30 years ago was granted an interim injunction preventing a film company (France) and a Montreal theatre (St. Denis) from showing a movie based on the case.

Mr. Justice Joseph Jean granted the injunction to Telephore Gagnon to halt the opening of the picture scheduled Saturday.

Other petitioners were a brother and sister of the murdered girl, an aunt, and nieces, nephews and cousins.

Alphonse Patenaude, K.C., for the petitioners, argued that there had been no consent by the family to production of the movie and the case was strictly a family affair.

The hearing will take place Nov. 14.

At the trial 30 years ago the step-mother and father of Aurore Gagnon were found guilty of the child's death from months of inhumane treatment at their home near Des Chailons, near Quebec.

The step-mother was sentenced to death but died in prison before the date set for execution. The father was sentenced to life imprisonment. He was released after five years for good behavior.

Title of the movie in question is "Little Aurore-Infant Martyr."

ROTTERDAM, The Netherlands, Nov. 7 — (Reuters) — Holland-America Line ships carried 16,000 emigrants from Rotterdam to Canada this year, it was learned

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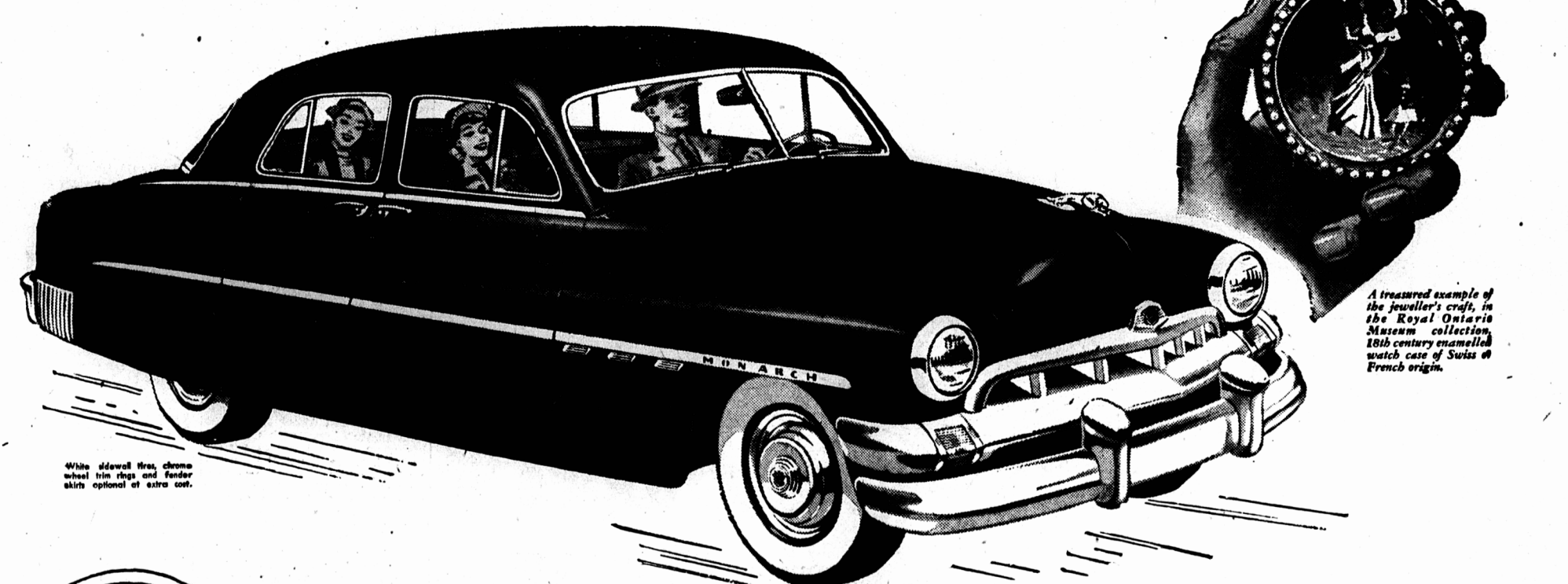
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