

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In order to study some of the fundamental problems of Management, Feeding and Breeding of Dairy Cattle in the tropics, the writer, for convenience, has taken as examples, the two main groups of milk producers in Trinidad. These two groups are the Peasant, Small Producer and the Larger Private and Estate Dairies, which together produce all the liquid milk consumed on the Island.

This Milk-Producing Industry, although long established, is not thriving as well as would have been expected, especially with the ever increasing demand for fresh milk at a reasonable price level.

The three basic requirements of a balanced and successful Livestock Industry anywhere, providing a market for the produce is assured, are Management, Feeding and Breeding. These three are closely inter-related, and if any one of them be weak, it will tend to upset the balance of the other two. If, for instance, a cow from a good line of milk producers is subjected to bad feeding, no matter how good her inherent milking capacity may appear to be on paper, her dam and her sire's dam might have yielded 10,000 lbs. of milk, she will not be able to yield any more milk than her Feeding and Management permits.

Many writers have expressed the view that the establishment of such an Industry would stabilise and

improve Tropical Agriculture. R. K. Kirkham and colleagues (74) who have been investigating the prospects of mixed farming in Uganda state, 'Experimental work in Uganda tends to confirm evidence obtained in other countries in recent years, that both sides have everything to gain by closer interlocking of stock farming and arable cultivation.'

In an article, S. J. Dash (22) states, 'Livestock is a good indication of the agricultural progress and development of that community,' but goes on to express the view that it has been sadly neglected in the tropics where the standard of general care and management is amazingly poor.

Mixed farming does connect unsaleable products on the farm with saleable animal products or products that can be readily utilised by the Peasants or Local Producers. In this way a regular supply of milk, and milk by-products, such as ghee, butter, cream and cheese, also meat, hides, bones for manure and glue, blood for food and manure, as well as Pen Manure, for the maintenance and improvement of soil fertility.

In areas where cattle keeping has been practised for a long time, on a large scale, especially in India and Africa, the cow has tended to enter very largely into the tribal life and culture of the people. In India the cow is regarded as sacred by the Hindus, and in Africa, as a measure of a man's wealth and social prestige. When it is considered that the cow is probably one of the most useful animals, converting as it does, unedible materials into food and products for man, the above can be understood.