

# PRODUCE MORE MILK!

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## Beware of the Microscopic Milk Thieves

THE cry for more milk has been too persistent to go unheard. Milk has become the nation's priority food No. 1. A plentiful supply of clean milk has come to be regarded as the first essential to a healthy population. Every citizen is becoming milk conscious.

The members of the planting profession are alive to the implications of this growing demand for more milk. They are busy thinking out ways and means whereby, while keeping cattle to manure their crops, they can at the same time make a material contribution to our National Milk Bank. Some, like those at Mahaberiatenne Farm, have certainly given the lead in the right direction and established an up-to-date dairy as a side line to their main occupation. Coconut planters too are also running dairies as side lines and are finding they can organise and run dairies on their estates with pleasure and profit but they need technical information and guidance. They should not hesitate to avail themselves of the help which the officers of the Agricultural Department, who are concerned with Animal Husbandry are always ready to give.

Stepping up the production of milk demands a knowledge of the different branches of Animal Husbandry. One must have a knowledge of the characteristics and capabilities of the different breeds of cattle, their adaptability to the environment in different parts of Ceylon, the principles of genetics, the methods of selection of sires and dams, the methods of introducing high yielding strains and of improving local breeds and the methods of proper feeding and management of the bulls, cows and calves. These are matters which I hope it may be possible for me to deal with in a series of articles at some later date. At present I feel that every planter in undertaking this enterprise should first be made aware of the fact that just as there are money thieves who break into banks and cause acute shortages so there are milk thieves which, if not properly controlled, can render the task of increasing the supply of milk almost impossible.

“A small leak will sink a great ship” and losses from individual farms will mean that Ceylon's required milk target can never be reached. A knowledge of some of the important thieves is therefore vital. The most notorious are:—

- (a) Foot-and-mouth disease.
- (b) Contagious abortion.
- (c) Mastitis.

These three are in the habit of persistently breaking into our National Milk Bank and are mainly responsible for the acute shortage. With them at large and uncontrolled, we cannot hope to reach our target. We may as well try filling a leaking bucket.

It is only when owners begin to increase their herds, to meet the growing demand for milk that they come face to face with the havoc these three can cause. Their importance as major problems in economic milk production has been recognised by Agricultural Research Councils in many countries; increasing attention is being given to their study with a view to their control and alternate eradication.

Although much still remains to be discovered by further research, our present knowledge of these diseases is sufficient to enable us to take proper measures to keep them under control. In subsequent articles, I shall deal with each of these milk thieves, point out their characteristics and identification marks, the peculiar technique adopted by each, and the methods whereby they can be successfully brought under control. These articles will be written in the form of questions and answers because experience has shown that the usual descriptive form of article often leaves the reader unsatisfied and without a definite answer to his most pressing problems. I shall try and anticipate all the possible questions. I am, however, fully aware of the fact that readers are often more ingenious in framing questions than are writers, so I shall be glad to answer these queries if readers will write to me.

(Correspondence on this important subject is invited.—Ed.)