

LIVESTOCK UNDER COCONUTS

MARAWILA LIVESTOCK SHOW—1954

By

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AFTER a lapse of nearly three years, a livestock show organised by the Stock Breeders of the Chilaw District was held on 30th March, 1954, at Marawila. It was a grand success and a source of inspiration and encouragement to all breeders of livestock. The record number of entries, which was a source of embarrassment to the overworked officials, signified that livestock husbandry is now well established in this District.

Declaring the show open, the Hon'ble Mr. J. R. Jayawardene, Minister of Agriculture and Food, said he could not exaggerate the importance of the livestock industry, which was vital to our existence. The contribution which this industry can make in raising the nutritional standards and at the same time assisting the coconut industry was very great, he said.

He was happy that the Chilaw District had always been in the forefront in livestock improvement mainly due to the work of the Animal Breeding Centre at Marawila. He also drew attention to the lead that was being given by the Coconut Research Institute in improving the standard of the ordinary village cattle and he thought that that this was one of the answers to the problem of the increased production of milk in the Low-Country.

He said he was well aware of the problems and difficulties of milk producers in disposing of their milk and he announced that he would shortly be setting up a Milk Board to organise the collection and distribution of milk. He promised to give special attention to the livestock industry and said he would set in motion schemes which would enable owners of dairy cattle to sell milk and other dairy products at a profit.

Comparing the exhibits of 1951 with those of 1954, a keen observer could hardly fail to notice the marked improvement in almost all classes and breeds of livestock, especially in the European and Indian breeds and their crosses. The improvement in these crosses was really outstanding and demonstrated the valuable work which has been done by the Department of Agriculture in grading up the livestock population in the district.

While touching on the subject of up-grading cattle by the use of imported or improved sires, it is worthwhile to give a little more consideration to the subject. The practice, now prevalent in the Animal Breeding Centres, is to have a number of sires of various breeds and to leave the choice of matings to the owner. This policy, while well-intentioned has a serious drawback in that the resultant crosses, may not be suitable to the District, and by such indiscriminate crossing animals may have the blood of four or five different breeds and thus conform to what are popularly

termed "mongrels." If this were to be the result, which was never intended, then the good work done by the Animal Breeding Centres will be more than offset by the increase in these mongrel animals. The remedy for this would be for the District Livestock Organisation to decide on the breed or breeds which suit the district and breed animals to the desired types, so that in a reasonable number of years the district could boast of a uniform animal population. It is certain that some difficulties will arise, but it would be well worthwhile to attempt such a policy.



The Minister for Agriculture and Food and Mrs. J. R. Jayawardene accompanied by the Judges and officials inspecting the exhibits.

Coming back to the Livestock Show it is with a certain sense of pride that we can look back on the 1954 show as being among the best in the Island. The organisers are to be congratulated on the excellent facilities afforded to the exhibitors, and for the sense of team spirit that existed throughout. Every official had a defined job and carried out his duties well. There are one or two points that perhaps call for some comments, and the following suggestions are offered for the benefit of future shows :—

1. It would be advisable to have the show ground some distance from the main road. If this is not possible, there should be a side entrance for exhibitors, as there is always an inevitable last minute rush to get the animals into the show grounds, with the result that the road gets blocked with untold inconvenience to other users of the highway. In order to relieve this congestion the officials are then forced to let in the exhibits without proper numbers or classification into classes and chaos reigns.
2. Since the entries received were almost overwhelming it would be helpful in the future to have a preliminary selection of the animals before being brought for the show. This selection should be in the hands of those officers of the Agricultural Department who have close contact with exhibitors. It serves no purpose whatever to crowd the show grounds with animals that

are out of condition and not up to show standard. If this system were adopted it would greatly facilitate the classification and judging.

3. Another point that should be rigidly enforced is that no late entries should under any circumstances be allowed.

The breeds exhibited in the Poultry Section were mostly from the utility classes. It is almost certain that there will be more and better exhibits at future shows if Government can in some way make poultry keeping more attractive and profitable. It is almost useless to say that as we are importing Rs. 4 million worth of eggs a year, we should raise more poultry, while nothing is being done to give a just price to the producer for quality eggs, or to reduce the high cost of poultry feed.

Although the pig section did not draw such a large number of entries as had been hoped, yet the animals entered were excellent specimens. Here again a serious drawback to the pig industry is that there is no organised system of marketing, and the sale of pork is almost exclusively local. The condition of the goats exhibited was generally not good, but it was a great encouragement that as many as 50 goats were on show.

The organisers were lucky in obtaining the services of three eminent cattle lovers to officiate as judges, and it would not be out of place here to extend our sincere thanks, for the magnificent job they did under trying conditions. Their judgments were honest and unbiassed.

To those public-spirited citizens who have the livestock industry close to their hearts and who gave generous contributions in money and kind, the Chilaw District Livestock Breeders owe their sincere thanks as without their help and generosity, the Marawila Livestock Show of 1954 would never have been the success it was. Organisers of livestock shows in future years will, no doubt, look back on the Show for inspiration and guidance.

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