

FEDERAL ASSISTANCE IN LIVESTOCK IMPROVEMENT

The Canada Department of Agriculture (CDA) has always assisted the livestock industry in its attempts to reach a high level of efficient production with top-quality animals. Programs designed and carried out with this aim concern mainly the food animals—beef and dairy cattle, swine and sheep.

Canada has a large population of purebred cattle, swine and sheep. The general object of any improvement program is to identify bloodlines that will be most suitable to up-grade the commercial herds. In the case of meat animals, this means identifying the kind of breeding stock that will produce market animals with the minimum output of time and feed; in the case of dairy cows, yield of milk is, of course, the criterion; and in sheep, the products are spring lamb and wool. To these ends the industry relies mainly on the Livestock Pedigree Act, Record of Performance (ROP), grading of carcasses and competition through agricultural fairs, in all of which the Federal Government is deeply involved.

Livestock Pedigree Act

The Livestock Pedigree Act (RSC 1952, c. 168) provides for CDA supervision of the affairs of the breed associations registering livestock in Canada. The conditions of registration are carried out by the independently operated breed associations with the Government verifying the certificates containing the pertinent data of ancestry and ownership. A registration certificate in Canada, therefore, has the status of a legal document.

The Canadian National Live Stock Records (CNLSR) is not a government office. It is a non-profit, record-processing organization, carrying out the instructions of the affiliated breed associations on all matters pertaining to registration of purebred livestock. The Department of Agriculture must approve amendments to the constitutions and by-laws of the national breed associations, and registration certificates issued by the CNLSR. There are 31 affiliated breed associations in the CNLSR and four associations incorporated under the Act which carry on their own recording activities. In 1965, membership in the 38 associations (three administered by the Record Board) was 42,178; registrations numbered 279,910 and transfers 207,867.

The registration of purebred livestock in Canada is an industry in its own right. The recognition given to Canadian livestock pedigrees throughout the world is a tribute to the success of the co-operative effort of Government and breed associations in providing authenticated pedigree certificates.

Record of Performance Programs

Dairy Cattle.—ROP programs for dairy cattle were initiated in 1905 and have kept abreast of changes in dairy production techniques to provide the services and leadership required in the industry. ROP is now an integral part of dairy cattle production and has enhanced the stature of Canadian breeding stock in world trade. ROP records are the only dairy testing records officially recognized by the breed associations, and constitute the production requirements for registration of male calves in three of the four major dairy breeds.

Some 4,000 breeders are enrolled in the program and test in the neighbourhood of 110,000 cows each year. Although this is only 3½ p.c. of Canada's total dairy cow population, it constitutes basic seed stock testing adequate to provide the nucleus for the national purebred dairy herd, which in turn is the nucleus on which the commercial dairy cattle population is built. Because artificial insemination of cows is widely practised in Canada, breeding to ROP-tested stock is available to all farmers. At present, 60 p.c. of all dairy calves registered were sired by purebred bulls at Artificial Insemination (AI) stations. Dairy bull semen was used to inseminate 607,000 cows in 1964 and it was estimated that approximately 20 p.c. of the national cow population was AI-bred in 1965.