

From South India

Cattle Wealth

THE Indian Dairy Research Institute celebrated its Silver Jubilee at Bangalore last week. Dr. K. C. Sen, Director of the Institute, in his welcome address said that the fundamental contribution which applied dairy science could make in the direction of increased food production was to increase the production of milk per animal and its full utilisation and that the Institute had done substantial work in improving the pedigree of cattle which had won high appreciation from all over India. The Maharajah of Mysore, inaugurating the celebrations, made the pertinent observation that while the cattle wealth of India has attracted the attention of many parts of the world on account of its numerical strength, there is no room for complacency from this fact if the value of the cattle is taken into consideration. The advancement in cattle breeding and particularly in the breeding of milch cows, has neither been rapid nor commensurate with the needs of the population. The need for improving the quality and increasing the number of milch cattle, the enhancement of the yield of milk in such cattle and the proper distribution of milk under hygienic conditions to remote areas are, therefore, of paramount importance.

Very little attention has been paid so far in this country to the improvement of the breeding of milch cows and buffaloes resulting in the mal-nutrition of the urban populations. Though it is conceded on all hands that the yield of milk will increase consi-

derably by improving the strain of cows and she-buffaloes, achievements in this direction have lagged far behind promise.

Now that Government decided to raise the quality of livestock, the proper selection of animals which meet fully the purpose for which they are raised should engage their first consideration. Experts have to concentrate their attention on the twin problems of (1) how to choose breeds and (2) how to select individual animals. After acquiring thorough knowledge of the characteristics of existing stock, they must devote their energies towards the improvement of common herds and flocks by using pure-bred sires of a breed falling within the type desired. The claims of superiority for certain breeds should be considered critically since it is well known that in the raising of livestock there is no best breed for all conditions. Careful attention should also be paid to the selection of individual animals to the several factors associated with the purpose for which the animals are raised, such as appearance or type, pedigree, performance, prepotency or the ability to transmit desired characteristics to offspring, etc.

Brahman cattle are native to India and have been held as sacred and are never killed intentionally or used as meat. They belong to a species of cattle characterized by a hump extending over the shoulder and neck. During recent years cattle ranchers in U.S.A. have tried crossing the Brahman on the Hereford

and Shorthorn breeds which has produced excellent results. The cross-breds were immune to the tick, withstood hot weather well, and grew faster than the cattle of the pure or high-grade European breeds. By crossing Brahman bulls on Shorthorn cows and then by selecting and breeding within the cross, the King Company in Texas developed a new strain of cattle called the Santa Gertrudis breed. It has now been established that Brahman cattle that are bred pure produce excellent sires for crossing and that the Brahman cross-strains crossed with dairy breeds give promise of successfully combining the desired qualities of the Brahman with the dairy type. In India there are several different strains of Brahman cattle differing appreciably in type besides pure Brahman of the Guzerat strain. The possibilities of crossing them with other select dairy cattle may be explored.

Recent experiments conducted by the Indian Agricultural Institute, New Delhi, on the famous breed of Sahiwal cow hold out promise of better breeds of cattle for the Indian farmer. Experiments on the Sahiwal breed, which is a milch breed, were directed towards increasing the milk yield, early maturity of cows, reduction in the dry period and production of good breeding bulls. A cow of this type kept under controlled condition in this Dairy produces as much milk as 10 village cows.

This result, though satisfactory, is far below those of oilier countries, and India has still much leeway to make up in improving her livestock in numbers and quality.