SANITARY CARE IN STOCK TRANSPORTATION, IN THE PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF TEXAS CATTLE FEVER.

By W. B. Conery, M. D.,
St. Louis, Mo.

In presenting to you the few observations and suggestions on the dread pestilence among our cattle, commonly known as Texas, Spanish, or Splenic fever, it is not my purpose to enter into any extended history, nor offer any special suggestions in the way of treatment, save those that will best subserve the rigid enforcement of sanitary laws for the successful prevention and control of the disease. The existence of Texas fever can no longer remain a doubt. The loss of untold thousands of dollars in property interest to our Northern stock-owners by its ravages, only too certainly traced through the tens of thousands of cattle afflicted, in every instance to the stock imported from Southern ranges; the thousands of square miles of territory annually invaded; the growing prejudices and irresponsible quarantines established by communities to serve as barriers in restricting the traffic and transit of Texas cattle, thereby seriously depressing and threatening total disaster to the trade,—are proofs conclusive, and enduring evidences, of the reality of this plague. When the farmer's attention, which so frequently happens, is called to the fact, through some mysterious hidden cause, that his cows hold up their milk, seem listless, indifferent, off their food, and feverish, with drooping head, lopped ears, humped back, and other alarming symptoms characteristic of some grave disorder, proving eminently contagious, and rapidly fatal, frequently destroying from one half to two thirds and sometimes the entire herd in the short course of time, the question naturally suggests itself, to search for the cause and find a remedy to stay its terrible desolations. In this emergency, the farmer and stock-dealer, anxious for a cure-all, are only too eager to grasp at every prescription and nostrum advertised. Whilst laboring under the erroneous idea, fostered by quacks and charlatans, that experimentation will reveal a specific remedy for every disease, and that medical science has nothing to do but label each disease, and to search for specifics which do not exist, the best and most scientific prescription can be of but little avail; and a rational and successful treatment, and, still more, the prevention and control of the disease, are rendered an impossibility without the knowledge of its nature and cause, and the rigid enforcement of certain hygienic laws, which are as applicable to the preservation of the health of the lower animals as they are to the life of man.
SANITARY CARE IN STOCK TRANSPORTATION.

After a careful and thorough research and investigation into this malady, it is contended on the part of scientists that the disease is epizootic in nature, contagious as to members of the same herd, and rapid in progress; that Texas cattle are invariably afflicted with it upon their native ranges; and that they carry the disease to foreign pastures, as ships carry contagious disease to foreign countries, even though no case ever occurred on board. They carry the disease germs in their hair, in the stomach and alimentary canal, and they are communicated to our Northern hoofs, even though weeks have elapsed since Texas cattle passed over the trail; whilst, on the other hand, it is contended by the owners of Southern ranges that the disease has never been recognized among their hoofs; indeed, that Texas cattle are wholly exempt. But be this as it may, the facts remain, and are indisputable, that the germs have their origin and are propagated among them, and are communicated to our Northern hoofs; and the problem, how to combat the Nemesis which threatens disaster, and total exclusion of such cattle from our Northern markets, and do justice to all interests and the capital invested,—burdened with all its complexities and disagreeable intricacies,—must be left, sooner or later, to sanitarians and political economists, through wise legislation, to solve.

Texas and other Southern plains must always remain the nursery or breeding-grounds for our beef cattle; whilst Colorado, Montana, Wyoming, Nebraska, and other Northern states, will furnish the grazing and maturing ranges. Of late years great changes have taken place, owing to the influx of immigration into the state of Texas, which has caused the fencing of farms and ranges to such an extent that the herding, maturing, and driving of cattle through the state is rendered almost an impossibility: hence the immediate transportation of stock through the facilities afforded by railroads, now reaching all parts of the country, necessitating the subjection of the cattle to all the hardships, abuses, and deprivations incident thereto, before reaching their destination, in preference to the old and reliable way of slow driving and herding in small herds, more fully accounts for the recent dissemination of the disease into the extreme Northern states, and has brought about the discussion of the feasibility, to avoid the possibilities of irresponsible quarantines and state interferences, of establishing a national highway or trail, with the average width of ten miles, up through the Pan-Handle of Texas, that yearlings may be driven in such herds and with such care and strict observance of sanitary regulations as to avoid the possibility of transmitting the fever into the maturing ranges of the more northern territories, where the cattle thrive, and become dispossessed of the power of communicating the disease in transit to our Eastern markets.

While the above scheme has many advantages and ardent supporters, there are so many insuperable barriers to be encountered in its successful consummation, owing to the right of adjoining states to legislate their own affairs, that without their full cooperation the establishing of a national highway or trail is seemingly impracticable: nor can these difficulties be
overcome and the desirable object accomplished, until cattle-men learn and realize the importance of a rigid application and a thorough dissemination of sanitary laws, which will not only subdue the already existing but fast growing prejudices, but must of necessity enhance the value of their stock; but owing to the constantly increasing demand for beef cattle throughout the country, and our Southern and Western ranges being the source of supply and must always remain so, the laws of commerce naturally seek the most available facilities to meet the markets. The system of slow driving and grazing has been almost totally superseded: hence the possibility of bettering the condition of affairs, in shipping by rail, must receive a more rigid attention.

The question of establishing a particular date, as is proposed by the "Commission of Animal Industry," for the shipment of Texas cattle, to begin when they would not be liable to disseminate the disease germs, is rendered impracticable from the fact that the herds cannot be shipped in winter, nor until after the first spring months, and after they are in a fattened condition for market, which necessarily confines their transportation to the season most dangerous to the propagation of the disease. Therefore the problem resolves itself into one of two things,—the establishing of abattoirs in the vicinity of Southern ranges for the slaughtering and shipping of all dressed beef in refrigerating cars, or the enactment by each state of stringent sanitary laws and the rigid application and enforcement of the same, and to maintain a healthful condition of the cattle in transit.

The number of animals, now shipped annually from the ranches of the great Western and Southern states and territories to the great cities of the interior and seaboard, is enormous. The distances traversed are so great, that the journey, under favorable circumstances, would be attended with the most insuperable hardships: as actually performed, it is accompanied by extreme suffering for want of food, drink, and space. At the place of loading they are driven aboard the cars, into which they are packed and crowded with blows and thrusts from their brutal drivers; and if any lag behind or refuse to enter, they are prodded with iron spikes sharpened so as to penetrate the flesh and give intense pain.

The time consumed in making the passage is from three to ten days, and frequently, owing to delays of trains, still prolonged. What must be the agony, from hunger and thirst, of the poor brutes under such circumstances, especially when exposed to the heat of midsummer, in the sight of green fields, and rivers, and lakes, of which they are not allowed to partake! Notwithstanding the wholesome law enacted by congress to protect animals during transportation, which requires that all animals shall have five hours' rest after every twenty-eight hours' confinement in the cars, and in this interval shall be driven into an inclosure provided for that purpose, where they can move about and be fed and watered, the eagerness of the shipper to meet the full tide of the markets too frequently assumes the risk regardless of the dictates of humanity, foregoes the law, and passes by the station. It is a common occurrence for
cattle to be shipped from the city of St. Louis to New York with but a single rest during the entire journey. Then, again, trains are often delayed, and remain side-tracked for hours; and the law is again ignored by the railroads, and the relays passed to make up for lost time, and the cattle, as a consequence, are allowed to suffer untold agonies. Is it any wonder, under such circumstances, that they are in a fit condition to propagate disease? Who can contradict the danger and the assertion that such cattle are totally unfitted for health-giving food-supply? The laws of humanity, and the cruel and demoniacal brutality, better imagined than described, which these poor beasts are subjected to—if not the sanitary prevention of the many fatal diseases in man, too certainly traceable to the consumption of diseased animal food—cry out and imperatively demand reform. It is useless to deny the existence of such a state of affairs. It is useless to contend that the law of supply and demand regulates and justifies the end, and that necessity recognizes no mercy. It is true, the enactment and rigid application of stringent laws at first would apparently entail some hardships, and might prove oppressive to cattle-dealers; but the salvage in loss, by shrinkage in weight, death, and injuries incident to the reckless manner of transportation as now conducted, with the general improvement of the condition and health of the animals delivered in the markets which must necessarily follow under any system of reform, will not only counterbalance the ill effects first experienced, but will greatly enhance their value, restore confidence, and in time assuage all fears of the terrors and dangers of the importation and transit of long-horn stock.

To bring about this most desirable result, it would necessitate a united cooperation in the rigid enforcement of the laws in existence, and the enactment of such other measures, by the various states, as would tend to maintain a strict and rigid surveillance over the sanitary conditions of the cars, in the loading and unloading, and in the general condition of the cattle in transit. In the furtherance of this it would be advisable for the different states to delegate the powers of quarantine to competent and constituted authorities, and establish corps of inspectors along the lines of transit whose duty it should be to see that the cars and relays, or resting-pens, are kept thoroughly cleansed and disinfected after every loading and shipment; and they should be vested with full power to enforce the laws, and report all infringements and violations to the authorities for prosecution. Under no circumstances should the cars be overloaded and the cattle remain too long together, since the disease among the animals on their native ranges is of such latency as to render its existence questionable. The overcrowding, the breathing and rebreathing the same air, causing "crowd poison," together with the deprivations and constant mutations and physiological perversions endured by the animals in transit, may be sufficient for the generation of the germs, if it is not their absolute cause per se. At all events it renders them unhealthy, and undoubtedly contributes greatly to the propagation and wide dissemination of the disease. Railroad companies should be compelled to look after
the sanitary condition of their trains, and contribute more attention to the careful handling and transportation of cattle, and at least furnish some of the necessities the laws of nature and humanity demand. The animals should be shipped at proper intervals, with food, plenty of room, and fresh air, and watered frequently. And for this purpose it would seem practicable for the companies to place troughs in every car, to be flooded at the tanks at least as often as the engines require water. The relays or resting-pens should be frequently cleansed, and all unsanitary accumulations promptly removed and disinfected. The cattle should be daily inspected, and all those which are diseased, injured, and broken down should be strictly isolated, and retained until thoroughly recuperated before proceeding on the journey.

If Texas fever has made its appearance among Northern herds, the same rigid application of sanitary measures—the strict isolation of the sick, and separation of the cattle into small herds, the change of pasturage, and the feeding of "ensilage," or succulent food such as green corn, turnips, and pumpkins, as is proven by the experience and timely suggestions of Maj. John S. Mellon, of St. Louis—is both beneficial and curative, and is our only hope and best remedy for the prevention and control of the dread disease.

The enforcement of such a system of sanitation, in these days of speculation and eagerness for the accumulation of wealth, seems overwhelming, impracticable, and oppressive; but the time must come, sooner or later, with the growing prejudices, together with the property interest involved, and the earnest demand for a better sanitary control of food-supply, when the enforcement of such measures will become imperative. Then, and not till then, will the dread of the importation of long-horns and Texas fever be shorn of its terrors.