

ONGOLE CATTLE SURVEY.*

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Some three years ago a member of the Indian Legislative Assembly, asked a question about the extensive export of Ongole cattle and the resultant deterioration of the breed. This was referred to the Government of Madras who, after enquiry, took action and prohibited the export of Ongole Cattle from the Madras Ports. As a result of this, the query arose as to how far the deterioration of this valuable breed of cattle had gone on and whether any steps could be taken to arrest it. Before any definite figures or conclusions could be given, it was found necessary to make a detailed survey of some of the areas where the breeding of this type of cattle is carried on.

This work was taken up by the Livestock Section and has been going on for the past 3 years, off and on, as men were available. Up to now, the Ongole, Bapatla and Narasaraopet Taluks have been, and Guntur Taluk is almost, completed. There is thus sufficient information available for forming general conclusions about the whole area. The work in future will tend towards enquiry as to whether extension of cattle breeding can be better encouraged in some of the inland taluks which are not suffering from the economic and other factors which are warring against Cattle Breeding in the taluks near the coast. I did part of the work in the Bapatla and Guntur Taluks and I have the records for the other taluks available. These four taluks fairly represent the dry and wet areas of the Guntur District and the following observations may be considered to apply to the whole district.

The survey is confined to cattle of the pure Ongole type; each and every village and hamlet is visited and a questionnaire is filled for each centre. The questionnaire includes an enumeration of the number of cows and breeding bulls, approximate number of calves born annually, details of disposals of calves, details of methods of feeding and grazing.

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Those conversant with Indian conditions, need no telling that Agriculture is the main industry of the country and that the chief source of power for it is cattle power. Cattle also provide highly important products milk and Farm Yard Manure. Some nations have been able to replace animal power and manure respectively by machinery and chemicals. This replacement does not seem to be possible in this country except to a small degree because the size of the holdings and the economic conditions of the ryots stand against machinery and the climatic and soil conditions, against chemical manure. The results obtained at the Saidapet College and Farm in the use of machinery and those at Coimbatore in the use of chemical manures afford ample proof that the above inference is correct. Even ordinary improved implements, as iron plough, harrows, water pumps cannot be worked without strong bulls. Mr. R. D. Anstead has explained clearly the importance of Farm Yard Manure and other organic manures in his article "The Manure Problem in South India and its solution;" so cattle are not only indispensable elements to our ryots but are everything to them because to them they are the chief source of power for production. Hence it is a great misfortune to see that that source of power is deteriorating.

I must now explain the economic situation of the ryot in connection with his cattle and then go on to the facts regarding the cattle, so that you can judge how far the ryot is at fault, how his methods can be improved and to what extent he deserves the help of the Government.

Since I joined the Livestock Section I have visited many villages, mixed freely with the ryots dining and sleeping in their sheds, and discussed all the matters with the old ryots of villages, gathering all information possible. Firstly I would say that the ryot of the town and the rich landholder of the village who form a very low proportion of the ryot population are not to be taken into account. The bulk of the ryot population in the Guntur District can be classified as follows:—

1. *Wetland ryot*:—(a) Under canal irrigation.
(b) Under rainfed tanks.
2. *Dryland ryot*:—(a) With first rate black regada soil.
(b) With red soil or second rate black soil.

1. (a) *Wetland ryot—under canal irrigation* :—These form a fourth of the ryot population and the average holding of the ryot is 5 acres. He also takes on lease another 5 acres. He keeps a pair of work animals. His net income from the combined holding is Rs. 266 per annum i.e. Rs. 22 per month roughly. With this he has to support a family of 4 to 6 members and maintain a pair of buffaloes and one or two cows.

(b) *Wetland ryot—under rainfed tanks* :—The area under rainfed tanks is small and so these form about 1/20th. of the ryot population. The average holding of this class of ryots is about 4 acres to which is added about 5 acres of dry land taken on lease. This ryot maintains one pair of work animals. His net income from the holding in a normal year is Rs. 240 i.e. Rs. 20 per month. With this he has to maintain a buffalo and a family of 4 to 6 members. Most of these do not maintain a cow. If rains fail or the season is late, they get nothing or a poor crop.

2. (a) *Dry-land ryot—with first rate black regada soil* :—These form 1/10th of the ryot population and the average holding is about 8 acres. The ryot maintains a pair of work bullocks; his net income in a normal year is Rs. 410 i.e. Rs. 34 per month. These ryots maintain a pair of buffaloes and a family of 4 to 6 members. Most of them also maintain a cow in bad seasons, they get low yields.

(b) *Dry-land ryot with red soil or second rate black soil* :—These form 3/5th. of the ryot population and the average holding is 12 acres. He maintains a pair of work bullocks. His net income in a normal year is Rs. 120 per annum i.e. Rs. 10 per month. With this he has to maintain one or two buffaloes and a family; most of these do not maintain a cow.

I have thus shown briefly the average earning capacity of a land-holder in a normal year. Variations in the holding capacity of a ryot may exist according to the extent of land taken on lease. He has to pay to the landowner half the net income from lands taken on lease. The above earnings alone do not make both ends meet; so the ryot and his family work in their fields and work for daily wages in field work. His pair of bullocks is lent out for work whenever it can be spared or he drives his cart for hire; thus he is just able to maintain his family. If rains fail or an animal dies or a ceremony has to be performed he runs into debt at a high rate of interest, with the result that is

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In India people are not acclimatised to the torrid, sub-tropical climate of India. In the Guntur district, where between the very wide range of crops and

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