

Breeding Kangayam Cattle in Madras State

by

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The Kangayam Cattle: The Kangayam breed of cattle has its home in Coimbatore District extending from Dharapuram Taluk to Palni Taluk of Madurai District. They have many characteristics in common with Mysore cattle (Olver 1938) and an admixture of the blood of Ongole cattle (Phillips 1944). The purity of the breed is being maintained by the well known cattle breeder, the Pattagar of Palayakottai, whose forefathers dedicated themselves to rear this breed. Even today the finest specimens are to be found in the herd of the Pattagar.

With a view to preserve the breed and to spread it for work purposes in some of the Southern districts, the Livestock Section while under the Agricultural Department started breeding Kangayam cattle in 1925. In spite of the fact that breeding of these cattle has been maintained for nearly 30 years by the Agricultural and later by the Animal Husbandry Department, it depends on the herd of Pattagar of Palayakottai for fresh blood.

The Kangayam is a very fine draught animal suitable for ploughing and cart work. It is hardy and capable of fast work, though it is only second in the matter of speed when compared to Hallikars or Amrat Mahals. The Kangayam though not a milch breed gives more milk than any other breed comprising the Mysore group of cattle. Indeed the Pattagar of Palayakottai had been doing a fair amount of trade in liquid milk especially since the last war when the demand for the same increased.

Recognising the possibilities of improving the milch quality of the Kangayam, experiments were started both by the Animal Husbandry Department and under the auspices of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi.

As the Pattagar keeps the herd under ranch conditions the cattle are usually wild. Their pointed horns with their upward growth can make them exceedingly dangerous to men and cattle. The herd in its home tract has for its grazing, rich pastures of Kolukattai grass (*Pennisetum cenchroides*) which is rich in protein, calcium and phosphate. The climate is hot and dry in summer

and moderate in winter months with a low rainfall of about 15 to 20". In spite of this low rainfall, the grazing is generally sufficient.

The farm is run on a feudal system and the Pattagar evolved it in such a way that it continues to work well even today. His tenants who not only look after their own lands also provide the labour for running the Pattagar's farm. The Pattagar's bulls serve all the cows of the tenants and the calves are selected from the progeny which is always under his observation. He is also able to see which of his bulls are good and prepotent. In view of the fact that selection is mainly for producing good work bullocks it is easier for assessing the value of the stock. Once a year young bulls are picked up for training and are tethered for the first time for feeding and handling them before being sent to the market. This period of training usually takes about 3 to 6 months. It is during this period that concentrates like pulses and pods from the white babul are fed to the young bulls. The soil rich with lime - producing pasture like *Kolukkattai* and *Indigofera* contribute much to the success of herd management. Such of the animals that do not come to the high standard of excellence are culled out. Taking a very rough estimate about 30% of the young stock are culled out periodically.

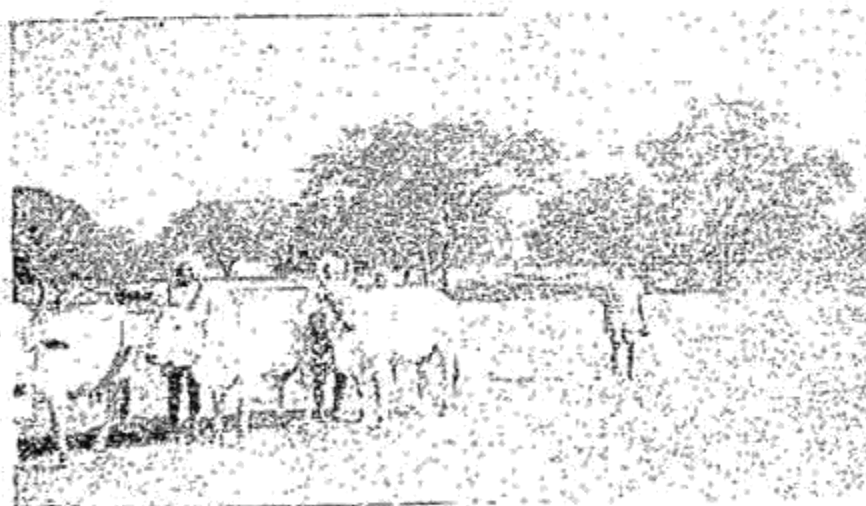
At a time when the Alambadi and the Mysore breeds were spreading fast in the area, in order to save and preserve the Kangayam breed, Mr. R. W. Littlewood, the then Livestock Expert with the Madras Government decided to breed Kangayam at the newly acquired farm at Hosur. The farm is about 3000 feet above sea level on the Mysore plateau with a dry, mild climate and moderate rainfall of about 30 inches annually.

The foundation stock were purchased in 1925 and 1928 from the Pattagar. The farm at Hosur is over 1650 acres with large paddocks for grazing. The Kangayams were so wild in the beginning that it was difficult to control them. Very often when folded at nights with about a 6 foot wall enclosing them all around the whole herd could jump out of the enclosure and stray far out in search of grazing. At the time they were all purchased they were in good condition, robust, active and very alert.

Physical Characteristics: Two varieties are recognised in the breed - one large and the other small. The body is compact with short legs. They are white in color, the males showing deep grey



Kangayam Bull, Prize winner at Delhi Show.



Kangayams — good milkers.
(Livestock Research Station, Hosur.)