

A DOZEN YEARS WITH aAa

by Leo Blanding

(first printed in The New England Bulletin, July-August, 1962)

Editors Note:

As a service to our readers and in response to many inquiries regarding aAa, we invited Leo Blanding to tell us about it. This was one more chore added to his busy schedule and we are very appreciative of his cooperation.

To my surprise I have been honored with a request from the Editor of the Bulletin for an article on our aims and experiences with aAa, Animal Analysis Associates. Our aims are simple, and are the same as they were twelve years ago: to help people breed better cattle. Our experiences would fill volumes. Many of them have been related in our regular ads in the Bulletin over the past ten years, and more will be coming in future ads. To sum up our experiences we can say whole heartedly that they continue to fulfill our aims in ever increasing abundance.

Just recently someone asked whether the aAa program is in any way in conflict with the need for herd classification. This question had not come up for years. Breeders who have used the program and who understand it know of course that analysis no more conflicts with classification that it does with production testing, showing, consigning to public sales, foot trimming, or the many other practices which the good breeder follows in improving and promoting his cattle. In fact, experience has demonstrated time and again that breeders have achieved better results in

all of these departments through the careful use of analysis. Classification and analysis serve two different purposes. Each is serving well.

When this article appears in print, it will be upon the twelfth anniversary of the beginning of analysis in New England – August 1, 1950. In those early days many of our friends predicted that we would not last a year. Some of them even sentenced us to death by starvation. But the work has grown tremendously in these years as a successful method of breeding for many breeders, and we have continued to eat three meals a day right along.

The growth of the program over the country is illustrated in the following annual figures at five year intervals with the most recent year added:

1950	744	head
1955	14,972	head
1960	26,986	head
1961	30,143	head

Through December 31, 1961, we had analyzed a total of 183,328 animals. An up to the minute figure would be substantially larger, as 1962 is really rolling.

As I write these lines, the month just closed has brought the largest volume of business here in New England of any months since the work began.

The principle of analysis is based upon the sharpness and

roundness of cattle, always trying to maintain a balance between the round and the sharp, and avoid going too far in either direction. A more recent development is the addition of a code number to the R and S analysis. This is an advanced step in analysis that puts the weight upon the particular part of the animal that you would want to least double up. The code method is already in use by a few of the keener students of breeding, and the demand for it is growing steadily.

One of the accomplishments that have pleased us most is the result of a critical study made by one of New England's largest and most highly respected breeders. In his large herd he has been using analysis method of breeding since its earlier years. Cows that were the result of No. 1 matings have averaged to produce 1366 lbs. milk and 62 lbs. fat per year more than their stable mates from matings that analysis indicated should not have been made. Bear in mind that this comparison covered the same period of time and the same conditions of management and environment.

There was another instance in which I asked the owner of another large heard how the daughters of one of his herd sires were producing. He replied that they were all doing very well except two and those two were the results

of poor matings according to analysis.

Just a few days ago a breeder told me that he used to lose a lot of calves. But after he began to use analysis, the calf mortality dropped to almost nothing. There was no change in management, care, sanitation or feed. He had previously been doubling up too much sharpness which resulted in calves that were too weak. After he planned his matings on the analysis method, he brought in the strength and constitution that were needed and his calf losses disappeared.

There is a great producing herd here in New England that has had a large number of cows drop out because they do not have the strength of udders to last. They have used a long succession of very sharp bulls.

We also think of another herd in this area that has been using analysis for a longer time. They likewise have tremendous production, but their matings have been planning to maintain remarkable strength and size and ruggedness. These cows are living to advanced years and transmitting their good qualities to coming generations.

And for years we have been seeing the results of analyzed matings in the show ring and classification ratings.

There is no longer time to do much of any soliciting of

business. Our work schedules are full to overflowing. Many new clients are joining the ranks because they have seen the results other breeders are getting, and individuals that appealed to them that are the results of good matings.

Another powerful factor in our growth is the missionary work that is continually being done by users of analysis, in spreading the word to their friends and neighbors. Some of the artificial breeding personnel have also been very active in encouraging their members to use analysis because they have seen that it is helping them breed better cattle through proper use of their bulls.

Some breeders that have had their feet braced against analysis all these years are now coming into the program. Almost invariably they tell us that there were many things that they had misunderstood, and on which they have been misinformed. The trouble is that they talk with other people who do not know much more about it than they do themselves. The best source of information is from breeders who have been using the program for several years in their own herds. Or even the Analyzer might be in position to clear up some of their doubts.

The system is not 100%. We doubt that we shall ever see that in this business of cattle breeding. You can pick out an animal that is better or

worse than analysis would lead you to expect. But if you line up your cows in two rows, on that has been bred according to analysis, and the other that has not, there is no question as to which group you would prefer.

We are all prone to be impatient in expecting immediate results. More than once breeders have pointed out a good looking heifer that was not the result of a good mating. Then of their own accord they would tell me a year or so later that she had developed into an unsatisfactory individual and produced so poorly that they had to let her go. And conversely and occasional unattractive animal or slow starter that was the result of a well balanced mating, would become an outstanding cow, and justify the owners faith in analysis by giving her a little more time.

We do not try to remake a breeder's program. We merely try to help him make better use of what he is already doing.

In my lifetime of close association with the great breed of ours, I have never been engaged in such fascinating work, or in an endeavor in which I could see so much good accomplished, as has been my pleasure and privilege during these first twelve years with aAa.