

R/AGR/GRA/1#7

Stanley Common

PASTURE REPORT

by Sidney Miller

September 1969

C. S. 1095/A

Ross House,  
Stanley.

August, 15th, 1969

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary,  
STANLEY.

Sir,

During the Executive Council Meeting at the end of April, His Excellency the Governor asked me to examine the Stanley Common and make a report upon the general pasture conditions thereon and the state of the feed.

I have the honour now to produce this report which will be in two sections, firstly the general condition of the areas the manner in which stock are worked upon them, and secondly the views and requirements of the two dairies and what possible Government help they may require.

#### 1. THE COMMON AND PENINSULA

With Mr. L. R. Anderson as guide and on the department's horses we spent in all three part days and covered practically every acre. Taking the Common first, the feed generally was not over plentiful but was fairly good at the back of the town, from the north side of Sapper's Hill about as far east as abreast of the Canache.

Along the south coast from Mullet Creek right round to the north east boundary fence, the area was, or had been over-grazed and feed was short and scanty, though most of the horses we saw were in fair condition and some of the young ones very fat.

The two paddocks at the east end where the two Frisian bulls are kept were rather bare though the bulls were in, I would describe, as passable condition. These bulls need an early replacement and this is urgent; the older one has been in use since 1962 and is the father of the second bull. Both are being used on their own female progeny and in the case of the elder one have been for some years. Such in-breeding is alright if one is using pure and line-bred stock but this is of course not the case here, and I would emphasize a very early replacement.

The cows we saw are mostly of Frisian blood, but were generally in poor condition, and in many cases showing fairly extreme poverty; milking cows in this state, however much they may be hand fed cannot be expected to produce very much milk. The current practice in the case of Rozee's cows is for the Agricultural Department men to put the cows, a few at a time, into the small paddocks at the east end with the bulls.

In the case of Hoggarth's cows, he has been more independant and bought his own Ayreshire cross bull from Messrs J. L. Waldron Ltd., of Port Howard. He has kept a young and nice-looking bull off this one, but here again he is getting close to using the elder bull on his own heifers.

Except for areas too small to be worth the labour and cost of fencing, in general I would say that the Common as a whole does not lend itself practically to cultivating and regrassing. But there are several small paddocks, some of which have been in the past improved with varying success, which in my opinion might well be worthwhile to plough up and re-grass. These however, are not by any means all belonging to Government. Whether the owners would be prepared to let them on a long and 'improving' lease, or to sell outright, I do not know. The idea in making this improvement suggestion is that these paddocks, provided they were kept under Department control, could be of very great importance to the dairymen - there would, however, especially in the case of those at the back of Stanley, be a need for gorse hedges or other artificial shelter; no milk cow, however well-fed can produce a maximum of milk unless in the cold weather that cow has sufficient shelter when outside the byre.

byre/It is.....

It is not in my opinion likely to be of any help to have the Common sub-divided. In the first case with so much peat still available for fuel and the boggy nature of the lorry tracks, drivers are not likely to respect fences and gates when they have a pair of wirecutters in their tool box. In the second case I do not think such sub-division would be of any particular advantage to the cows or the horses. Mr. Anderson did tell me that the feed as a whole everywhere is better than it was when he first joined the Department - if this is the case I can only say it must have been pretty poor some years back.

The Secretariat very kindly passed me an old file which contained a recommendation to fence the Common in the 1920's. This made interesting reading and the original suggestion for sub-division came from the late Mr. Hugh Munro, the Stock Adviser from New Zealand. Accompanying his recommendation there were many letters from users of the Common - all of which expressed horror and concern at the idea, but whether these letters and opinions were based on sound 'feed' knowledge or were merely from people who might so have to travel further to obtain their animals, I do not know. As a result the Common was partly fenced but this fence has been pulled down long since.

Mr. Anderson and I spent some four to five hours in a full inspection of the Peninsula on July 30th. Feed here was very good as it is the practice for the Department to remove all cows from here in October, with one exception to which I will refer later; these cows are moved during the summer and up to about the following June, between the Fairy Cove area on the north side of the harbour, and the main Common. As a result, this long spell gives the Peninsula plenty of time to produce good pasture for the winter. I would however, observe that such a continued long spell is not necessary, and in my opinion it would not affect winter feed value in the Peninsula, and at the same time help to prevent the present 'eaten-out' appearance of the Common, if during the summer the dry cows were allowed into the Peninsula for two to three weeks at a time, after the end of January. I would recommend this because we have observed during the more recent years at Roy Cove, although the native camps which in past years never had a real spell from grazing stock do indeed produce an abundance of feed, this is usually at its maximum by February (stock having been removed October/November). From then on such areas do not produce any more growth, and in fact, benefit by intermittent light grazing for short periods and are still in a first class condition to carry greatly increased (by early standards) stocking right through the winter. It is important to realise that grass needs grazing, under control, if the owner is to obtain the maximum feed value from any particular area. It certainly does not give better feed value if it is allowed to grow well past the height of seed production and so become somewhat rank and therefore less nourishing.

With regard to the Peninsula itself, I think it might well be worthwhile to surface seed on its eastern half amongst the sandgrass mounds, which are themselves largely grassed over with native fescues and agrostis. It should be possible to drag a small drill-type machine amongst these mounds but it would, of course, be probably fatal to make any attempt at proper cultivation as the sand is lying just underneath and once turned over would blow away and leave bare and unproductive ground.

On the western part of the Peninsula, from Gypsy Cove right around to the high ground opposite the Canache, there are probably about three or four hundred acres of waste ground almost entirely composed of large fern and diddledee. Unfortunately however, in the writer's opinion, this area as a whole is far too rough to lend itself to economical cultivation and reseeding. It would require bulldozing first before any tractors and ploughs, or rotavators could do any good at all. There is a small tussock point at the northern end of Hadassah Bay which would almost certainly produce good tussock, but it is too small for this to be an economical proposition.

proposition/There.....

There is however what must have once upon a time been a large extent of tussock area, before unrestricted stock had access to it and so killed it, out on the eastern beach area from Christina Bay around towards Surf Bay. This area would I think be in the neighbourhood of one hundred and fifty to two hundred acres - in fact a sizeable and useful paddock. It would, however, require about one and a half miles of fencing costing about £450. and here it would be necessary to hurry slowly. The writer has been told that in the 1930's, Mr. Weir, Stock Adviser, had this largely planted with tussock but with poor success. However, I have been unable to discover whether the planting was extensive or whether in fact it was ever fenced. There is no residue of any previous fencing signs.

I discussed this possible project with Mr. Anderson; in fact we made a separate journey there in the Department's landrover so that we could walk all over it and make a more detailed examination. I suggest that the present Department might profitably do some experimental work in the spring when the land has dried out more than at present. This work could be very small and fairly inexpensive. There is plenty of old partly pulled down fencing in the Peninsula which could provide enough material for the Department to put up two or three scattered plots about forty or fifty feet square, sufficient to keep the cows out, and plant these with tussock (there is plenty available) and then wait and see how they developed. If this planting was successful a major paddock could result which would be a very great lift to dairy stock in winter months.

On sheet two of this report I made a brief reference to the current practice of removing all stock from the Peninsula during the summer months, but with one exception. This exception refers to the rather numerous cows that stay in the Peninsula all the year round and are never out because they appear to be the property of the lighthouse keepers. Even Mr. Anderson did not seem to know how many there were of these, but all we saw were in very fine condition and I am sure there were more likely over twenty than under that figure. I understand that the lighthouse keepers do kill the occasional beef animal out of these, which meat finds its 'gratis' way to the town - there were certainly several animals there that would be in the beef category. There are, the writer understands, a maximum just now of three and a minimum two persons resident at the lighthouse.

The writer is also aware that Trinity House requires certain obligations from any community that wishes to maintain their lighthouses, and that this includes a supply of milk. But, Trinity House, whatever its agreed requirements, surely cannot demand a minimum of twenty plus milk cows for about two people? From a stockman's viewpoint I would unhesitatingly say that a total of six cows all the year around, properly spaced for calving would be ample. After all many Falkland Island farms allow a maximum of eight cows for married families, right round the year. Furthermore, as I understood from Mr. Anderson, the lighthouse personnel use the Government bull to their cows, though whether this is another task for the Department I did not ascertain.

#### SUMMARY OF SHEETS 1 - 3

The Common. Appears to have been overgrazed during the summer and autumn; should be saved more. As far as the writer knows the annual grazing fees have remained at 10/- per animal; though this might perhaps be reasonable for milk cows it would appear that there is room to increase this figure for horses as such are kept for pleasure only; also I am informed that there are one or two young animals there which are not tamed and have been running for some considerable time.

The Peninsula This is closed during summer except for the cows owned at the Lighthouse; it would stand some controlled stocking from February to when the spare cows are all wintered there from June to October. Some consideration might be given to regulating and reducing the milking troop at present used by the Lighthouse staff.

staff/Stock....

Stock - Cows. New bulls are urgently required. If some better type of milk cows were obtained the total number could be reduced; a better supply of milk per cow would also result from improved feed using regrassed existing paddocks and better control of the Common.

(Sgd.) SIDNEY MILLER

SECTION TWO - THE STANLEY DAIRIES.

1. The Paddocks

I visited both Stanley dairies and talked with the two owners separately on 13th August, 1969. In each case besides looking over their buildings we walked around the various paddocks which they use; some they own and the larger ones on lease from Government. Feed generally was poor even allowing for the time of year and all the various paddocks need improvement, both to the pasture and in some cases to the fences.

In the case of the Government-owned paddocks I would suggest it might be the job of the Department to keep the fences in repair, unless or course, this is included in the lease terms. A study of a plan of all these paddocks would be useful. The paddocks used by Rozee need hedges or artificial shelters as they are in a bleak area on high ground. Hoggarth is better off in this respect as his paddocks stretch along the shore from his buildings and are sheltered to a fair extent from southerly and south-westerly winds.

As neither dairyman has either the time or the means to improve the paddocks, I would recommend that the Department could do this and with an end result of increasing the rent for better final pasture; in addition I would suggest that then the paddocks should be under the control of an effective officer to avoid over-grazing and subsequent damage.

Hoggarth considers that with his leased paddocks so improved plus a strip of about 30 acres added from the Common and along the south edge of his present paddocks, he could permanently keep his milking herd both under his eye all day and be closely available for the twice daily milking. The same would probably not apply to Rozee to the same extent as his present paddock area is much smaller. The extra fencing for Hoggarth as well as any renewals at Rozee's need not entail anything more than four barbed wires with posts twenty yards apart and minimum battening.

Rozee would like to make use of the small area around the Power Station; he told me this would require about forty yards of fencing and the bridge being replaced by a passo libre. I did not visit this area so do not know if this is practical. He has the use of the large 'Dairy' paddock but would prefer to lease this paddock so that he can lock the gates. At present the paddock is not much use to him as townspeople leave the gates open.  
open./ Agricultural.....

2. Agricultural Department Machinery

With regard to implements for any future improvement, the writer does not know the extent of implements owned by Government. Rozee told me that there is a rotavator in one of his sheds but I did not see it so am unaware of its condition. Hoggarth has a plough and other implements of his own including a very old tractor ex Ajax Bay and was using the Department's set of heavy discs; however he says that the Grasslands Officer shipped this to Douglas Station two years ago. I recommend that this be returned shortly.

3. Bulls and Artificial Insemination In this respect, Rozee urgently and Hoggarth shortly, will require fresh blood. I would urgently recommend that steps be taken to cable London to inquire whether any of the coming Advisory Team can undertake artificial insemination, and if so to bring any necessary equipment. Semen, according to the breed required, would presumably be available from Britain, Uruguay or Argentina. I consider that there is considerable urgency to investigate this possibility because in addition to Stanley dairies, probably several farms would like to take advantage of this project if it is known to be feasible; though the dairies would still need a temporary replacement of bulls locally, such A. I. would solve any problems in the Colony for future importation of fresh blood.

4. Heifers. It would be an advantage if heifers up to about 2½ to 3 years old belonging to the dairies could be kept separately from the dry milking cows. It is possible that nearby farms (Fitzroy or Berkely Sound area?) would be willing to run these animals free though at the owner's risk, because many farmers are now realising the value that increased cattle numbers can be on existing camps along with sheep.

5. Freight Rates on Hay Of recent years Government have let hay be shipped on their vessel at half freight rates; however hay is very light when baled and when the Harbour Department ships even at half rates, when this is by measurement tons, the cost to dairymen is excessive.

To quote an example - Rozee showed me two bills for two tons of hay obtained from Port Howard in 1968. These two weight tons cost him £30 first cost; "Forrest" measurement tons however totalled just over 14 tons amounting to £70; half freight rates reduced this to £35 but this was still greater than the first cost of the hay put on board. On top of this, of course, the dairyman still has to pay the lorry owner £1 per load delivered. In the case of a recent shipment, Government permitted Hoggarth to get further hay from Port Howard but at a freight charged on the weight of hay and not ton/measurement. I would recommend that this be continued for dairymen but at full freight rates; Under such conditions, Rozee's freight bill quoted above would have been 2 tons @ £5 = £10, against the £15 he had to pay.

6. Stanley Hay In the past I understand dairymen were allowed the use of the Department's Allen scythe to cut local hay. This machine is normally a one man job. I was told that this year this machine was allowed to cut their hay but under Department handling and man-hours were charged for two and sometimes three men. Whilst realising the importance of looking after the Government machine, this method cost Rozee over £20 for his small amount of such hay; I did see his labour bill but do not know how much hay he so obtained.

7. Private Milk Cows. There would appear to be a considerable number of these. Whilst no one can object to such private milking the two dairymen tell me that quite a lot of this milk is sold privately at 6d. per pint thereby undercutting the dairies. I presume that such sales are taxed.

8. Tussock Rozee (but not Hoggarth) was interested in obtaining bundles of tussock as supplementary winter fodder, and did in fact obtain permission for a load by small vessel from Kidney Island. I am not certain whether the Top and Bottom islands in Port William are leased to Bundes, but these are at least more accessible for tussock cutting.

- 9. Subsidies Government, I am told used to help dairymen a few years ago with a subsidy of £12. 0. 0. per month to help them obtain hard cattle food in winter when hay was in short supply. This practice appears to have been discontinued. I do not recommend that it should be repeated if the Government is prepared to subsidise the dairymen's future by pasture improvement generally, plus the freight reduction to a charge by weight tons as opposed to measurement.

10. T. B. Testing in Stanley I do not know with what periodic regularity this operation is carried out in Stanley, though I do know the Department is capable and does do the operation. The dairymen advise that it is around two years since any was done here and fresh stock could well have arrived into the herds.

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SUMMARY

1. Paddocks. The plans of these would require examination also the extra paddock area desired by Hoggarth. If the Department improves the paddocks Government could expect a higher rental.
2. Machinery It is recommended that Government examines the rotavator at Rozee's dairy and that the heavy disc be returned from Douglas Station. It is also recommended that Government ascertain what implements and tractors it possesses and the condition of them - also their availability from Public Works Department.
3. Bulls and Artificial Insemination. It is recommended that an urgent change of bull be made available where required and that urgent steps are taken to find out whether the coming advisory team is both able and willing to undertake artificial insemination.
4. T. B. Testing Is there a regular programme for this? The writer is unaware of one and it does not appear to have been carried out within the last two years.

Paragraphs four to nine are less important and are excluded from this summary.

(Sgd.) SIDNEY MILLER

Stanley. 14.8.69.

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