

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

WEDNESDAY, 3RD SEPTEMBER, 1902.

J. A. GILRUTH, M.R.C.V.S., Chief Government Veterinary Surgeon, examined.

Mr. Gilruth, on being examined, pointed out that the inception of the Stud Bill arose from the number of horses rejected on account of unsoundness by the Government Veterinary Surgeons when remounts were being purchased for the various South African contingents. Anticipating that the House would decide that some means should be adopted to prevent stallions affected with what are classed as hereditary unsoundnesses reproducing their kind in the present unsatisfactory manner, at a Conference of nearly all the members of the veterinary staff, held recently in Wellington, the opportunity was taken to discuss the question of hereditary unsoundness, and a decision was arrived at after full consideration as to those diseases which would be considered hereditary in the ordinary acceptance of the term by the profession in the colony. It was here explained that the term "hereditary" might be misleading. A "hereditary" unsoundness was not transmitted directly from parent to offspring—that is, the foal was not born with the unsoundness, but it was born with a tendency to ultimately develop certain unsoundnesses from which one or other of the parents might have suffered. The list of hereditary unsoundnesses was given as follows: Bone-spavin, ringbone, side-bone, roaring and whistling, navicular arthritis, shivering, stringhalt, multiple recurrent fibroids, and bad hooves.

In reply to *Mr. Buddo*, witness stated that "shivering" was a nervous disease, and that "multiple recurrent fibroids" were hard fibroid tumours which had their situation frequently (especially in draught horses) in the region of the fetlock. In one instance he had removed a tumour 28 lb. in weight from the fetlock of a stallion which was being used as a sire.

To questions by the Chairman and *Mr. Buddo* regarding "bad hooves," *Mr. Gilruth* explained that the Conference fully discussed the question of bad feet generally. Under this head would come a weak nature of the horn manifesting itself in bad sand-cracks, shelly hooves, seedy toe, &c. In cases of slight sand-crack—or, rather, splitting of the hoof-horn—the general conditions of the horn would naturally be taken into consideration. It would be manifest, however, that an owner of a horse with sand-cracks in the feet due to carelessness and inattention would only have himself to blame were the horse refused a certificate. Assuming the condition to be curable, it was his business to see to that before bringing the animal up for examination. He pointed out that "curb" was not included, for the reason that a curb might develop on the hock of an animal such as a steeplechaser through sudden strain, and that, provided the hock was otherwise strong and well formed, the unsoundness was of little moment comparatively. Curbs were only serious in weak hocks known as "curby hocks." That condition was certainly hereditary, but being chiefly a question of conformation the Conference decided that it be left out of the list in question. "Bog spavin" was omitted from the list partly for similar reasons, and partly because it is frequently developed in heavy aged stallions through strain in covering mares, the hocks being known as "boggy."

To the Chairman, *Mr. Gilruth* stated that he understood that in France all stallions were required to pass an annual examination. In France about three thousand stallions were owned by the Government and used throughout the country, and certainly all these had to be free of hereditary unsoundness. In Belgium he believed all the black Belgian stallions had to pass periodical examinations as to soundness—that is, those used for breeding purposes. In England there is no compulsion, but the King's premiums are only given to the winners after they pass a veterinary examination, and in practically all the show-rings prizes are refused to horses possessing in any degree hereditary unsoundness. All the previously mentioned diseases are considered hereditary by the profession in Great Britain and in Europe generally. In England there does not exist the same necessity for compulsory examination as in this colony, for the reasons previously noted, and because it is rare that a horse of any value over £50 is bought without a veterinary examination and certificate being given. In the colony it is rare that any certificate is asked for. Only recently a case came under his notice where a stallion had been bought for £150 that would not have brought £40 in the Old Country, for the reason that he possessed very bad "side-bones."

Regarding "roaring," the Chairman instanced the famous horse Ormonde, a confirmed roarer, used in England, and bought for America for £35,000, being ultimately repurchased by an English owner. In reply, *Mr. Gilruth* pointed out that horses were generally raced young, and the majority were off the turf before they had time to develop this disease very badly; that in the early stages roaring did not interfere very much with a horse, especially in short races, but that it was impossible for a bad roarer to stay out a long race. Roaring is caused by atrophy of the muscles of the left side of the larynx, which prevents free passage of air into the lungs, and this is bound to interfere with the animal's usefulness. The diseased condition was fully explained by the witness. It was admitted that a horse might be sound and perfectly useful for all ordinary purposes, and yet might not be able to stand training so well as another horse which was a "whistler" or "roarer," but only when the latter was in the early stage of the disease. The disease gradually increased in severity, and it was only a question of time when training would have to be stopped. Even an animal with a "bone-spavin" might win a race, provided the lameness were worn off before starting; but half an hour's rest after the race would see the lameness more pronounced than ever. As a matter of fact, racing is not necessarily any criterion. Witness had seen a decidedly lame horse win a race, but no one would have preferred the animal for a hack or a trap-horse in that condition. Witness believed that if the Bill were passed at least a tenth of