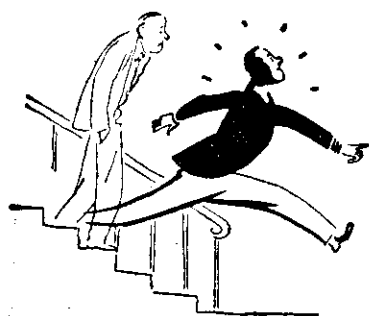


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MUSIC FOR MILKING

What Do Cows Think Of "Here Is The News"?

NEW ZEALAND is facing a crisis. Yes, another one. The dairy farmer is in trouble again. Life has never been easy for him, with prices up and prices down, and prices guaranteed; governments in and governments out; and now, with the responsibility of an Empire's food supply on his shoulders, he is coming up against the new problem of Daventry news.

The Waikato Council of Primary Production has raised the question of the effect of frequent news broadcasts on farm work. Members suggested that farmers stay at home to hear the latest news when they should be out working, and the Council decided to make representations to have the number of re-broadcasts reduced.

Grave as this difficulty may be, it does not seem to be having quite the same repercussions as the problem of persuading the cows as well as the farmers to listen to Daventry.

The Cows Object

Farmers are finding that the music broadcasts which once made the cowshed a place in which mellow chords mingled with the steady splash of the ever-increasing quantities of milk, are now being interrupted by re-broadcasts of the BBC News Service, and they are complaining that the cows object.

Wars and rumours of war, after all, mean little to a cow. It likes its grass and its turnips and its music, and does not seem to care whether Hitler has reached Brussels or Bordeaux.

But some farmers claim that milk production has definitely been affected because the cows refuse to give as freely when they are deprived of their beloved music and forced to listen to Daventry. Others say this is all green cheese, and pooh-pooh proposals that the broadcasting services should make special provision for musical broadcasts between 4 and 7 a.m. and 4 and 7 p.m.

The Authorities Are Reticent

No authorities interviewed by *The Listener* would agree to commit themselves

to an opinion on this matter of milking to music. No proper tests had been made, they said; tests would in fact be very difficult; and Kreisler himself could not alter the fact that cows ate just so much food and produced just as much milk as their internal machinery could manufacture from it.

Official scepticism, however, cannot alter the fact that very many dairy farmers keep receiving sets or loud-speaker connections in their milking sheds and swear black and white by the results.

It is well enough established that many animals do like music, and cows, bland

Official opinion, however, although careful to say that it is not official opinion, cannot get over the fact that it regards a cow as a machine for making milk, and not as a receptive audience for classical music.

A Machine For Milk

You put some food in one end of the machine and it comes out of the other as milk. If you put more food in, there is some chance that you will get more milk. If you put less, more than likely you will receive less milk.

But the dairying experts of New Zealand cannot reconcile themselves to the belief that cows, which perform such wonders with pasture and grass, can do the same with such intransigent stuff as music. They have never seen a cow chewing the cud after a feast of opera.

These worldly opinions must no doubt be considered, but no one who has seen the spiritual glow in the eye of a gentle heifer will be sure that behind the broad facade of face there does not lie immured a spirit which appreciates Schumann as much, at least, as a Dairy Inspector.

The probable explanation of the fancy of many farmers for milking to music is that it induces docility in the animals, and, no doubt, in the farmer himself. With everybody happy

in the shed, the milk flows freely, no cows kick, and the broom and shovel can with more confidence be left in the corner.

Although it seems doubtful whether music can increase milk production, it is likely that it creates conditions in the shed which maintain production at the highest possible level.

If a nervous cow is disturbed it may "hold" its milk: in other words, not secrete it. In that case a 20lb. milker might give five pounds or ten. But, if the nervous cow is handled gently, by a familiar milker, and assisted to a sweet frame of mind by music, it will give its maximum yield with no fuss.

Perhaps, too, the effect of the music on the milker must also be considered. With sweet harmonies sounding around the bails he is likely to treat the cow more gently than may be the case when Daventry is relating the latest exploitations of Hitler and his attendant jackals. And who knows but that even the cows may have heard of *Mein Kampf*? According to the Bible they are non-Aryan.



"... The cows refuse to give as freely when deprived of music and forced to listen to Daventry"

as they may look, have susceptibilities almost as sensitive as those of the horse or dog. Indeed they are more nervous than either of these possibly more intelligent animals.

The presence of a strange dog in the paddock as much as an hour before milking time will upset their temperaments and disturb the working of the mechanism that turns the pasture into milk. A stranger in the shed will have the same effect, and if the milker is in a bad mood the cow often senses the situation and gets crabby too.

Horses Like Bands

Horses will listen to bands playing, and even to bagpipes. A stallion in a show ring brightens perceptibly when the pipers march past. Dogs are often seriously affected by music, especially in a minor key, played by such instruments as strings. Violins will make many dogs wail most mournfully.

It is not out of place, then, to assume that the expressionless face of a cow hides a sense of rhythm at least as well developed as the musical sense of a crooner or swing fan.