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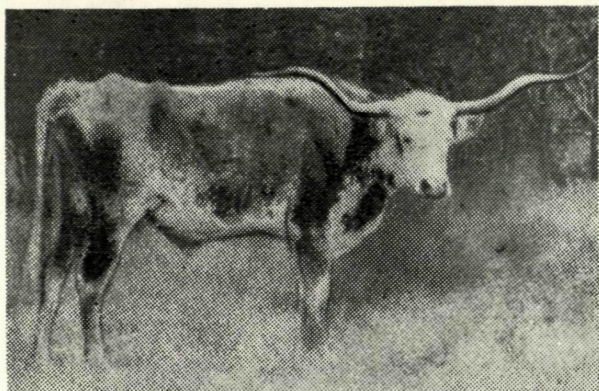


Fig. 1.—A Texas Longhorn, descended from the cattle brought to America by the Spaniards. Hardy and fleet of foot, they were well adapted for harsh range conditions, but their conformation left much to be desired

SANTA GERTRUDIS CATTLE

By J. A. MALLETT

A GROWING number of Australian cattlemen, distributed throughout most of the States of the Commonwealth, are experimenting with Santa Gertrudis Cattle—an American breed evolved from an admixture of five-eighths Shorthorn and three-eighths Zebu blood. Bulls of this new breed sell freely at four-figure prices and are in demand for “grading-up”; pure-bred females are not sold, but remain a closely-guarded monopoly of the parent studs.

The Santa Gertrudis breed was developed on the King Ranch, Texas, U.S.A., and takes its name from the Santa Gertrudis Land Grant originally granted by the Crown of Spain to a prominent Spanish family. The land was eventually purchased by Captain Richard King in 1853.

A COLOURFUL HISTORY

Captain King came to Texas from New Zealand before the Mexican War with a horse and saddle, ten dollars in cash and a boundless store of energy and initiative.

In 1846 he was operating a steamboat on the Rio Grande, transporting American soldiers and supplies to Mexican invasion points. By 1850, King and his partner Mifflin Kenedy owned a score of boats.

In 1852, while riding across the mesquite flats between the Nueces and the Rio Grande with a young lieutenant named Robert E. Lee—later to become world-famous as a Civil War leader—King noted the luxuriant grass along the coastland and conceived the idea of establishing a cattle empire.

What he lacked in practical ranching experience he more than made up for in farsightedness and organising ability. He

bought the land and spent most of his savings on water conservation projects, pens and corrals, in purchasing cattle and thoroughbred horses and in hiring an army of Mexican vaqueros. Indians and outlaws had driven off the previous owners of the land, but King had come to stay. In 1854 he married and brought his bride to live on the ranch.

In 1860, with Mifflin Kenedy as his ranching partner, King increased their land holdings and imported Durhams (as Shorthorns were then called) from Kentucky. The Civil War brought increased prosperity to the steamboat business, and in 1868 King and Kenedy halved the ranch between them.

When trail-driving opened up vast new markets after the Civil War, King purchased more land and fenced large tracts so that he could control breeding and improve his stock. When Captain King died in 1885, Robert J. Kleberg Snr. succeeded him in the management of the ranch and later married Alice King, the youngest of Captain King's daughters.

Robert Kleberg was a worthy successor to the man who pioneered this wild and law-

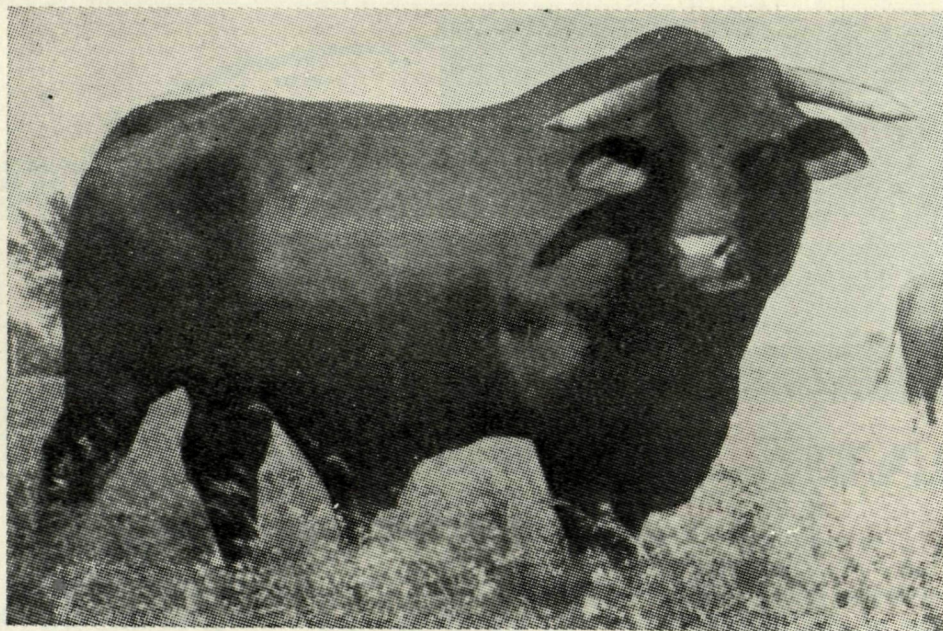


Fig. 2.—A son of Monkey, the foundation sire of the Santa Gertrudis breed

less country. He put down artesian bores; brought scientists from many parts of the world to study local problems; pioneered mechanical land-clearing and cultivation; introduced many pasture plants; commenced dipping to control cattle tick and installed geneticists and veterinarians to tackle the problems of breeding and disease control on the spot.

His son Robert J. Kleberg, jnr., the present president and manager has continued on similar lines until today the King Ranch is a world-famous showplace.

Oil was discovered on the King Ranch about 15 years ago and large quantities are piped to Houston 200 miles away.

The ranch has its own fleet of aircraft; a stud of pure Zebu cattle; a "museum herd" of British Longhorn cattle which has been in existence for over 400 years; a pure bred Jersey herd to supply milk for the army of employees; studs of Afrikander and French Charolais cattle, a stud of chestnut "quarter-horses" and a thoroughbred stud. Mr. Kleberg has twice won the famous Kentucky Derby with horses of his own breeding.

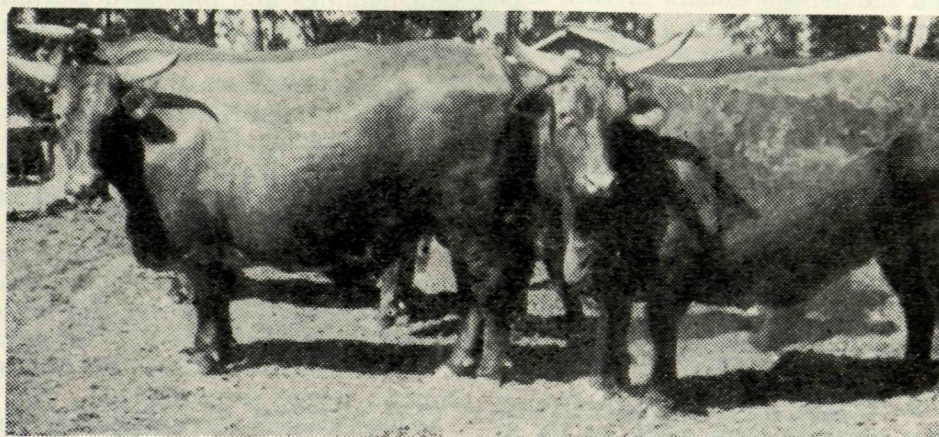
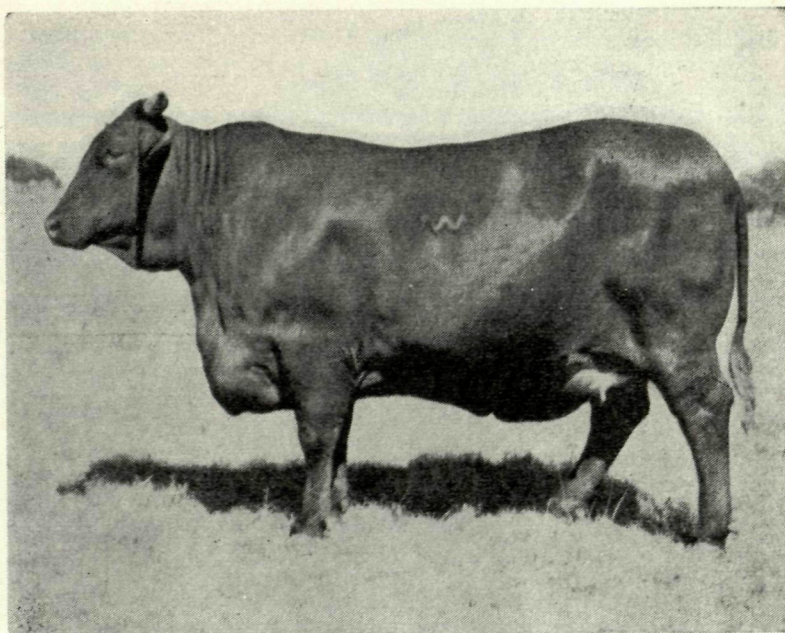


Fig. 3.—Full-fed Santa Gertrudis steers in prime market condition

Fig. 4.—A Santa Gertrudis heifer on the King Ranch, Texas



HISTORY OF THE BREED

The King Ranch is about a million acres in area and has an annual rainfall of about 26 in. most of which falls during two months so that dry conditions prevail for much of the year.

Despite vast sums spent on pasture improvement—the ranch has its own agrostologist—range conditions are very harsh and trying.

Originally, the ranch was stocked with about 40,000 Texas Longhorns, descendants of the cattle which the Spaniards landed at Vera Cruz in 1521.

Tough, wiry and fleet as deer, they flourished under the harsh conditions—but they were slow growing and sadly lacking in beefing quality.

Shorthorns and Hereford bulls were introduced and a grading-up programme was instituted until the ranch was stocked with about 25,000 practically pure-bred Shorthorns and a similar number of high-grade Herefords.

The two breeds were kept separate on areas most suited to them, but although carcass conformation improved, the harsh range conditions resulted in heavy stock losses in bad years—and bad years were only too frequent.

About 47 years ago, a half-bred Shorthorn-Zebu bull was introduced and mated

with some of the Shorthorn cows. The progeny of this mating did so well on the range that a further purchase of 52 bulls was made. These carried from three-quarters to seven-eighths of Zebu blood, and a planned breeding programme was put into effect, involving a mass of carefully-compiled records.

One of the best of the new bulls was mated to a blood-red milch cow carrying one-sixteenth of Zebu blood from the first bull introduced. A deep red bull calf resulted from this mating and on maturing he proved to be highly prepotent—stamping his characteristics on all his progeny.

Monkey, as he was called, proved to be the ideal sire and became the founder of a new breed—for by a system of in-and-in and line-breeding his good qualities were perpetuated and today every animal of the Santa Gertrudis breed is descended from him.

MANY GOOD QUALITIES

Santa Gertrudis cattle are red or cherry-red in colour and, because of their genetic make-up, they are highly prepotent, and show a very slight range of variation within the breed.

It is claimed that in its original habitat—the King Ranch, Texas—the breed produces beef that is outstanding in quality

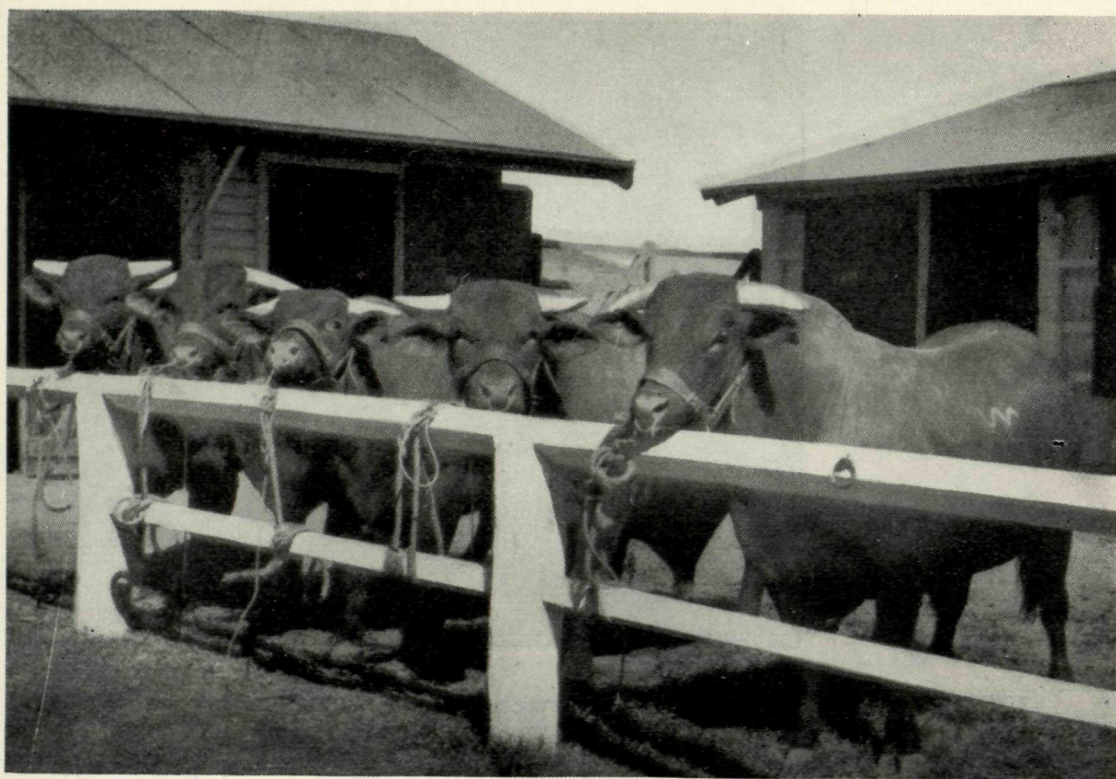


Fig. 5.—A line-up of Santa Gertrudis bulls at a sale in Queensland

and quantity under conditions which made beef-raising uneconomic when Shorthorns and Herefords were used.

The admixture of Zebu blood gives the Santa Gertrudis a high degree of heat-tolerance and pest-resistance so that the animals thrive in tropical areas and withstand hot dry conditions. Under more favourable conditions with moderate temperatures and ample feed and water they are said to achieve greater weights than the straight British beef breeds.

The breeders claim that Santa Gertrudis calves will average 100 lb. more at weaning, than the calves of British breeds under parallel conditions, and that mature cows and steers scale 200 lb. more at the same ages. The carcasses are said to dress out about 3 per cent. heavier than the British breeds and to carry a high proportion of choice cuts and a high percentage of meat to bone.

Investigations now in progress in Australia are designed to compare the performance of the Santa Gertrudis with that of British breeds in this country.

TEMPERAMENT

The Zebu cattle—or Brahman as they are generally termed in the U.S.A.—have the reputation of being highly nervous and, although they become reasonably docile when handled frequently, they are apt to be wild and intractable under range conditions. Because they can be depended upon to “turn on the fireworks,” Brahman cattle are widely used in rodeos and similar shows in the U.S.A.

When he visited the King Ranch in 1950, the chairman of the Australian Meat Board (Mr. J. L. Shute) reported that the Santa Gertrudis cattle appeared more “nervy” than Shorthorns or Herefords although less so than the pure-bred Zebus. Whether the wildness of the Zebu forbears would become a serious disadvantage under outback conditions remains to be seen.

THE KING RANCH IN AUSTRALIA

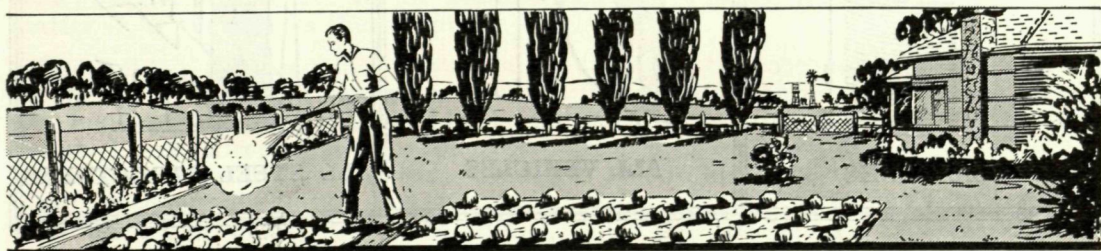
Following upon a visit to Australia, Robert J. Kleberg, jnr. and a group of

Australian cattlemen, formed King Ranch (Australia) Pty. Ltd., and purchased "Risdon" a 7,500-acre property in Queensland. In August 1952 a draft of 228 Santa Gertrudis cattle (201 females and 27 males) reached Melbourne to form the nucleus of the stud.

At the same time, King Ranch, the same group of graziers and a subsidiary of Swift & Co., the Chicago meat-packers took over a large commercial beef-raising property

in Queensland where it is intended to grade up to the existing herds by the use of Santa Gertrudis bulls.

Other importations of Santa Gertrudis cattle were made later, but the embargo on livestock imports resulting from the fear of introducing the disease blue-tongue, into Australia halted the influx of the new breed and resulted in keen competition for bulls at the King Ranch (Australia) annual sales.



ATTIC FANS FOR SUMMER COOLING

There are wide areas of inland Australia which enjoy cool still nights after hot days. In areas with similar climatic conditions in the U.S.A., use has been made of a low speed exhaust fan installed in the roof-ceiling space of a dwelling as an economical means of improving summer comfort.

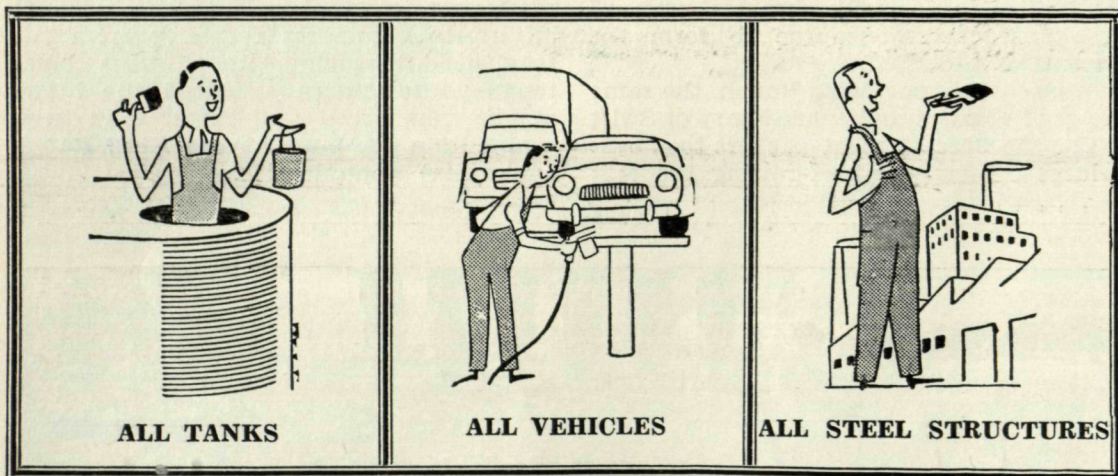
The fan which usually runs for a few hours during the night or until the early hours of the morning, draws air through the house into the roof space, thus—

- (a) replacing the hot air inside the house with cool air from outside;
- (b) providing movement of cool air to relieve the discomfort of the occupants;
- (c) cooling down the structure and thus ensuring a cooler house for the early part of the following day.

The Commonwealth Experimental Building Station has reviewed and assembled information on the installation, operation, and running costs of attic fans, based on overseas experience; and has also conducted tests to assess the results of using such fans under Australian conditions in houses with the same thermal performance as brick houses. The tests showed that the use of an attic fan can be expected to reduce discomfort materially on summer nights, particularly in inland areas. There will also be some reduction in air temperatures indoors during mornings following the operation of the fan.

NSB 7 (9d.) produced by the Station contains the summary of overseas information. The Station's Special Report No. 9 (3s.) describes the tests. Both publications may be obtained either from the Building Research Liaison Service, P.O. Box 2807AA, Melbourne, or from the Commonwealth Experimental Building Station, P.O. Box 30, Chatswood, N.S.W. Prices include postage.

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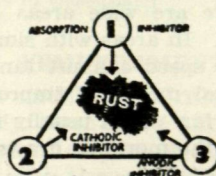
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