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# Pack 109 Item 13

Type: Script

August 2018

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**Training animals to do farm work** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

### Notes to broadcaster

Domestic animals are a great benefit to farmers. They reduce the farm workload and increase a farmer’s income. Animals can assist directly with ploughing, planting, and weeding. Animal-powered transport on the farm and to market helps with food production, distribution and marketing. Animals save time and effort used in carrying water and fuelwood. Animal power can also be used for lifting water, milling grain, working the land and building roads. Many different types of animals are used on farms, particularly cattle (oxen, bulls and cows), buffaloes, donkeys and camels.

This script presents some useful tips on how to train young cattle.

You might choose to present this script as part of your regular farming program, using voice actors to represent the speakers. If so, please make sure to tell your audience at the beginning of the program that the voices are those of actors, not the original people in the script.

You could also use this script as inspiration to research and develop a radio program on training farm animals in your own country.

If you choose to use this script as inspiration for creating your own program, you could talk to livestock keepers and trainers, and ask the following questions:

* What are the benefits of using farm animals for farm work?
* What are the best draft animals for small-scale farmers in this area?
* Is it possible for farmers to train their own livestock to plough, carry and do other jobs on the farm? If not, what services are available?
* What are the most important things to remember when training an animal?
* Where can farmers find help with training cattle or other domestic animals?

Apart from speaking directly to farmers and other important players in the local agriculture sector, you could use these questions as the basis for a phone-in or text-in program.

Estimated running time for all four parts: 6 minutes

**INTERVIEWER:** In some countries, farmers, their wives and their children do all the farm work themselves. But in other countries, they have trained animals to do some of the hardest jobs.

Today we will talk to an agricultural scientist who says that, if you want an ox or bullock to work for you, you don't have to spend a lot of money to have someone else train it for you. You can do it yourself if you just take the time. Today, we’ll talk about how it’s not difficult to train a young bullock as long as you have a trained bullock who can help teach him.

(Dr. or Mr. \_\_\_), what is the key to successfully training farm animals?

**AGRICULTURAL SCIENTIST:**

To be successful, you must like animals and not be afraid of

them. And more than anything else, you must be patient.

To begin with, you'll have the best success if you start off with a bullock that was castrated when it was less than a year old. It's easier to train a young bullock under three years of age. The animal should have a straight back and strong-looking legs.

**INTERVIEWER:** OK.Once I’ve chosen a young, strong bullock, what’s the next step?

**AG SCIENTIST:** After you've selected your bullock, cut off the sharp tips of his horns with a saw. This just might save you from a jab in the ribs! If you already have a trained bullock or can borrow a trained one from a neighbour, your job of training this young bullock will not be difficult at all.

Before you start, you must keep one very important thing in mind. Your bullock can become discouraged very easily, and it's your job to make sure this doesn't happen.

What you finally want him to do, of course, is to pull things for you – a plough, a cultivator, a cart. You might want to start out with a palm log. But don't expect him to pull any of these things right away or he will become discouraged. Remember, the bullock has never pulled anything in his life. All he knows is walking around by himself, going where he wants to go and doing what he wants to do!

**INTERVIEWER:** So it’s very important to start gradually with an untrained bullock. What do you do first?

**AG SCIENTIST:** First, you have to catch your bullock. You can use a rope or a piece of leather and loop it around his horns. If he's really hard to catch, you can loop it around one of his hind legs, too. If you've already inserted a proper nose ring, leading him to the yoke will be easier. You may need several people to help you get him into position so he can be yoked with another bullock. Whatever you do, make sure that the two bullocks are very securely yoked together.

Have your neighbour's trained bullock standing with one side of the yoke attached to his neck. Make sure there's a chain from the yoke to the palm log that your bullock and your neighbour's bullock are going to pull together.

At first, have the two bullocks pull something very light, like a palm log. The log might be about two metres long and perhaps 20 centimetres in diameter.

**INTERVIEWER:** What should a farmer expect from a bullock who is yoked for the first time?

**AG SCIENTIST:** Well,he may be hard to manage. He may try dancing around or

even bucking. But don't worry—after an hour or so with the older experienced bullock, he’ll soon be walking around and helping to pull that light palm log. The older bullock, of course, will know the word signals for "go," "stop," "back up," "turn right," and "turn left."

To train your bullock, you must practice those signals over and over again. Each time you give one of these commands, say it loudly and very clearly. The experienced animal will do what you're directing him to do. At the same time, the younger one will have to do it too, because he's yoked to the other one. So this way, he’ll learn to do what he's supposed to do when you tell him.

Now, as your bullock is learning all this, here are two important notes of caution:

1. Don't expect him to pull heavy loads for at least six months. A light cart is okay – but never a plough.

2. Don't hitch him up every day. Every other day is better, even for a whole year after he has learned to plough.

**INTERVIEWER:** What should you do if the animal just doesn’t want to cooperate?

**AG SCIENTIST:** Sometimes your bullock will need a little gentle persuasion. You

can do this with light touches of a whip. But do it gently, don't ever beat him with it. You could spoil him that way.

Sometimes, in the earlier stages of training, a bullock will decide to give up and he’ll just lie down! And what can you do then? Well, don't use a whip or start biting his tail like some farmers do – there are better ways! Here are two suggestions:

Build a small fire 20 or 30 centimetres from his nose. Put some green leaves on the fire to make a lot of smoke and then blow the smoke toward his nose. When he breathes in the smoke, he’ll get up!

If he doesn't get up, however, a sure way is to dig a hole under his mouth and nose big enough to set a pail of water in. Then as he's about to breathe in, push his nose into the water. He’ll get up in a flash this time, but you'd better be ready for a shower bath!

Now, if the bullock continues to be stubborn, and after a week of trying, you can't do anything with him, it’s best to give up on him and try training another animal.

**INTERVIEWER:** So there you have it. If you are patient and your bullock responds positively to your training, you should have an animal that will work faithfully for you for many years.

*Note: This script is an updated version of Package 3, script 5, distributed in 1980. The original speaker was George Atkins, founder of Farm Radio International. The updated version was reviewed by John VanLeeuwen, Professor of Epidemiology and Ruminant Health Management, Chair - Veterinarians without Borders-Canada, Dept. of Health Management, Atlantic Veterinary College, University of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, PEI, Canada.*

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