

# Selection and Training of Draught Cattle



# Draught Cattle

- Not all cattle are suitable for draft work. The suitable ones must be selected at the age of two to three years, when they are still growing. If they are well fed and properly cared for, they will grow into well built animals with a live weight of 400 kg or more at the age of five years. At that weight, one pair of suitable draft cattle is heavy enough to pull a plough working at 20 cm depth or a ridger.

# Draught Cattle

- The ideal draft animal is a healthy, docile male castrate (an ox) of local breed. He has a wide, deep chest, prominent hump and straight back and legs. He weighs at least 400 kg when grown up and has the stamina to do draft work for up to six hours a day.



# Selection

# 1. Breed

- Local cattle breeds are usually best suited for draft work because they are well adapted to the local climate, food and diseases. Exotic breeds which are not adapted to the environment, may not take the added stress of draft work well, they require good care and are likely to be sick more often than local cattle.

## 2. Sex

- The ox or bullock is the most suitable animal to begin with draft animal cultivation, because:
  - he is as strong as a bull
  - he is less wild, hence easier to train and to handle than a bull
  - he is stronger and easier to maintain than a cow.
- However, an experienced oxen farmer can also train and work with bulls and cows and use them for reproduction at the same time.

# 3. Age

- Young oxen or bullocks are between 1 1/2 and 3 years old.
- Young animals are light, cheap, easy to train, and they can accept commands. The selected young animal must have good growth potential; this will profit the farmer when he sells it for meat. Young animals also have a longer working life.

# 3. Age

- To obtain the age of the animal look at the teeth. This is done by determining the number of front teeth at the lower jaw of the animal, in other words, looking at (temporary and permanent) teeth to work out the age of the animal.



*2 years*



*3 years*



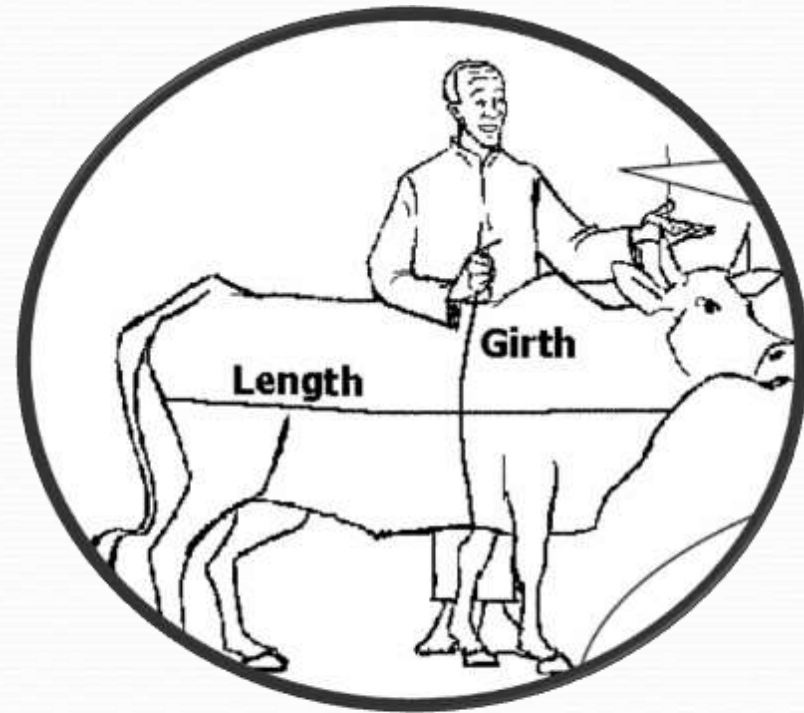
*4 years*



*5 years*

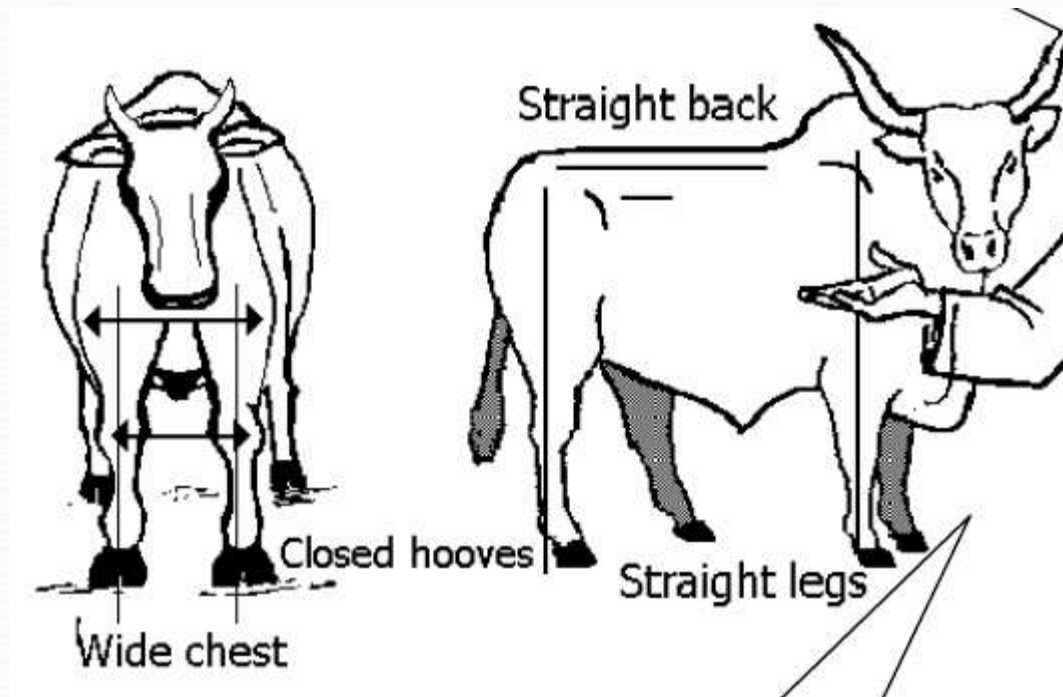
# 4. Weight

- Select a young local Zebu weighting between 150 - 300 kgs.
- Select only those animals with a potential to gain weight. Thus, eliminate an animal which falls below or goes above the recommended weight limit, because the animal will either be too light to pull the draft during the training or too heavy to manoeuvre during the training.



# 5. Conformation

In general, the animals you choose for work should be strong, heavy, healthy, docile and intelligent. They should be calm but not lazy.



# 6. Temperament

- A good draft animal should be active, intelligent and lively, but not wild and fierce.
- An animal which is too calm and therefore easy to train can be lazy while working.
- An active animal is more difficult to train than a calm one. But later on during work, you only have to control it, you don't have to push it forward.



# Training

# Training

- Training animals for traction involves an understanding between the trainer (yourself) and the animals. The animals need to trust you. For that we need to be patient and reward them for good behaviour.

# Training

Training may be carried out in Animal Training Centres, but perhaps when it is undertaken on the farm or within the village community, this provides a more practical and convenient environment.

# Reasons for Training Animals

- Trained animals can do more work in a shorter time.
- Trained animals hear and accept commands (voice commands).
- Trained animals pull better, like a team with well-coordinated movements.
- They are easier to control.
- They are able to pull heavy loads for longer periods.

# Seven Principles to Consider When Training:

- 1. The approach must be simple, calm, patient, persistent, and the trainer needs to be firm (not to show fear to the animal).
- 2. There should always be a routine and a repetition of the training steps, so that the animal adopts the new behaviour.
- 3. Spoken commands and names should be few and simple such as: “Go”, “Turn left”, “Turn right”, “Reverse” or “Stop”. Remember to always use the same language during and after the training.

# Seven Principles to Consider When Training:

- 4. Train either early in the morning or late in the evening so as to avoid the heat of the day.
- 5. Reward the animal for any positive behaviour, then correct bad behaviour immediately and don't reward. Rewarding the animal includes; patting on back, calling the animal's name, grooming him or giving some food.

# Seven Principles to Consider When Training:

- 6. Complete every step in the training programme before moving to the next one. Do not move to the next step, unless the animals have understood the one before.
- 7. To carry out the training you need the following items: a trained animal, a proper kraal, a good pegged training field and tools (ropes, different types of yokes, ploughs, weeders, loads etc).

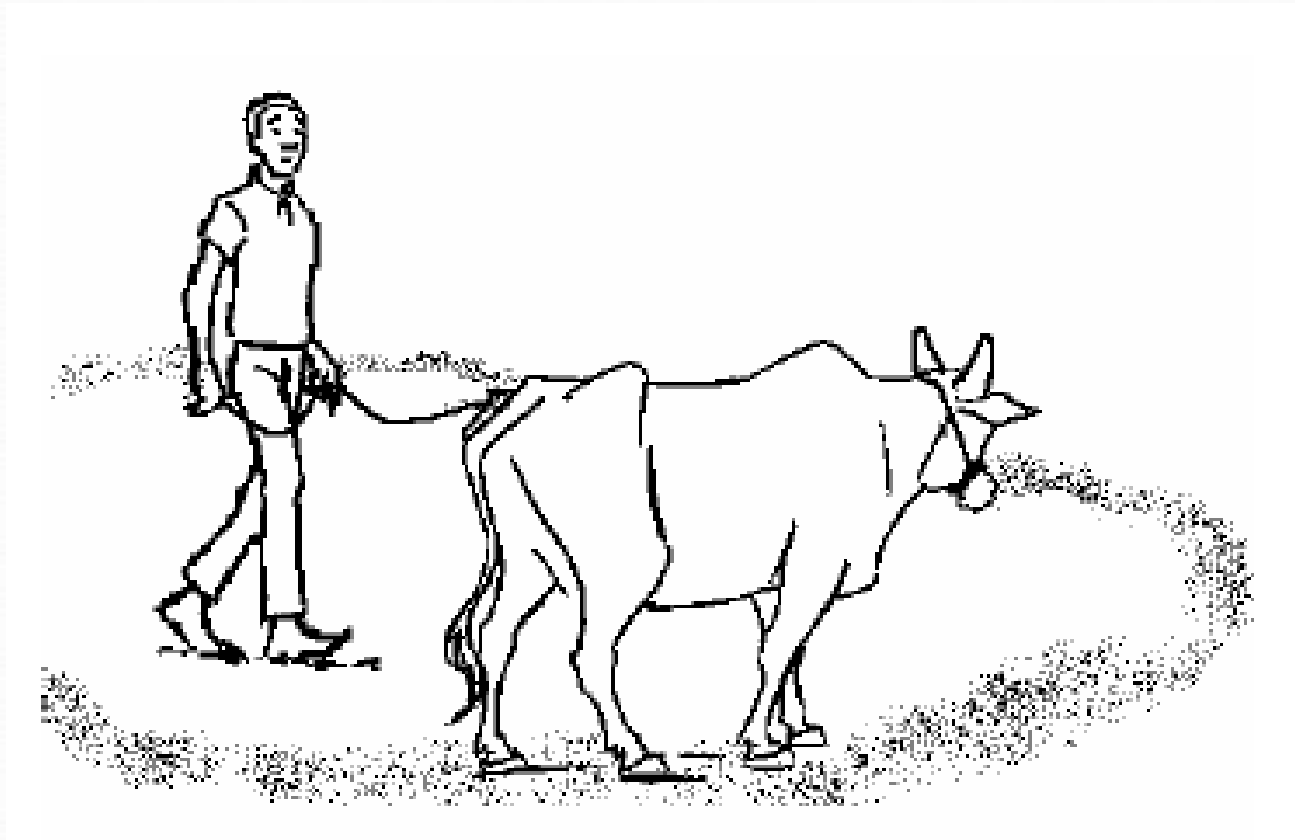
# TRAINING STAGES:

- (1) Holding the animal on a rope loop and leading it to walk (2 to 3 days)
- (2) Harnessing the animal and leading it to walk (7 to 10 days)
- (3) Accustoming the animal to pull a load (7 to 14 days)
- (4) Training the animal to work with tillage and other implements (21 to 30 days)

# STEP 1: Roping and Walking

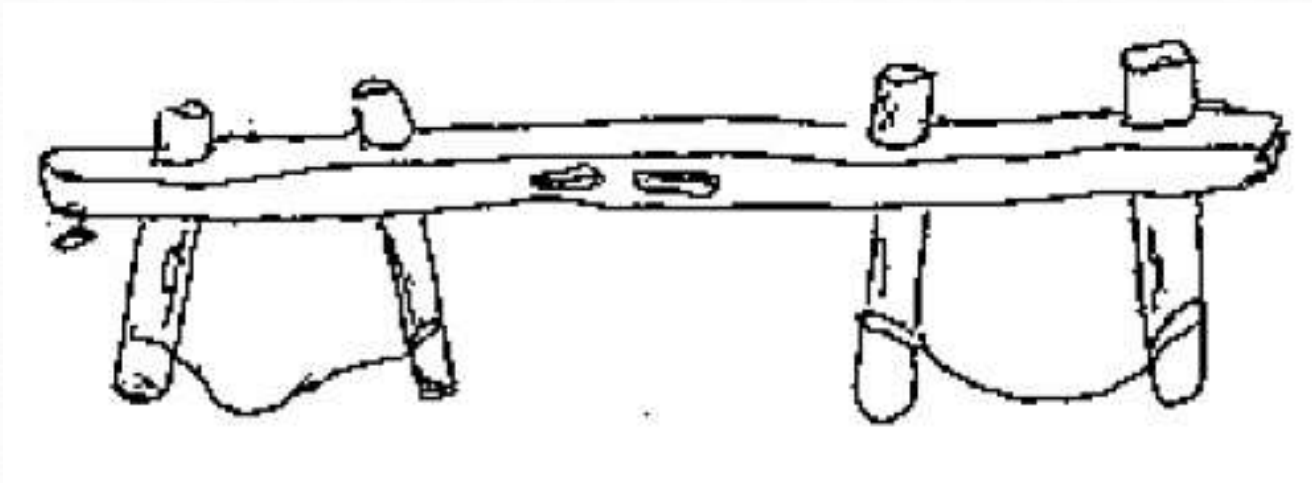
- The purpose here is for the trainer to get used to the new animal, to create friendly conditions and to remove fears/suspicious from the animals.
- You should tie the oxen with ropes and make them walk in circles without yokes. To tie you can use halters or nose punched animals. Each time you train, you reduce the rope that separates you from the animal, so that you come closer to it and this one keeps on gaining trust in you.

# STEP 1: Roping and Walking



## STEP 2: Harnessing and Walking the Animals

- In this step, harnessing or yoking is done in the kraal. After that, the animals are moved to the field. The objective here is for the animals being trained are able to accept harnessing and removal of the harness while they are outside the kraal.



## STEP 2: Harnessing and Walking the Animals

- If a trained animal is there, use it to train the new one, so that they learn to move in pairs. By the end of this step, the pair of animals should be able to move forward, stop, turn left, turn right and eventually turn and walk back using voice commands e.g. go, stop, turn-left, turn-right, about-turn, etc.



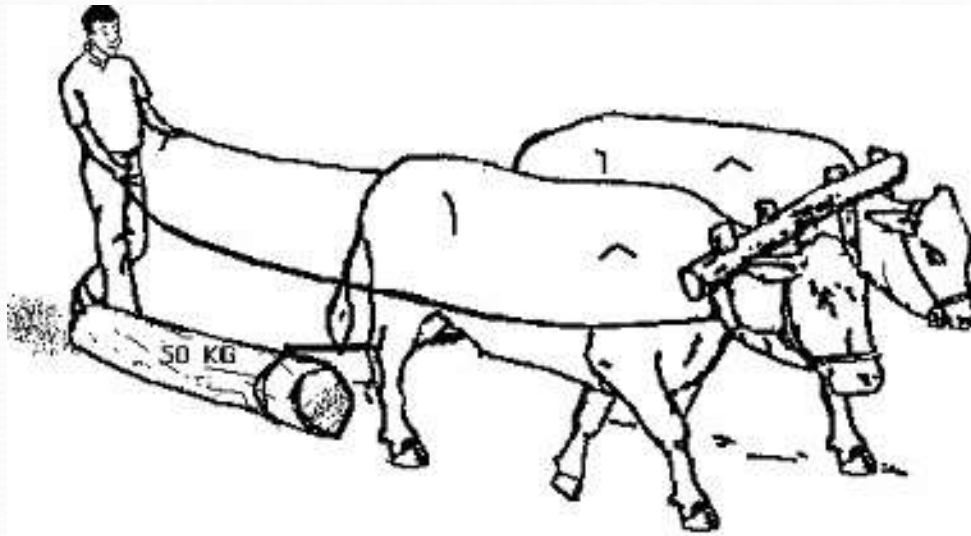
## STEP 2: Harnessing and Walking the Animals



The items used here include a yoke, ropes, a kraal, a training field and trained animal. These exercises should take 3-4 hours per day for 7-10 days.

## STEP 3: Pulling Loads

The purpose is to train the muscles of the animals and for them to gain strength to pull heavy loads. During this step, varying loads are introduced from 20, 30, 40, 50 kg /log.



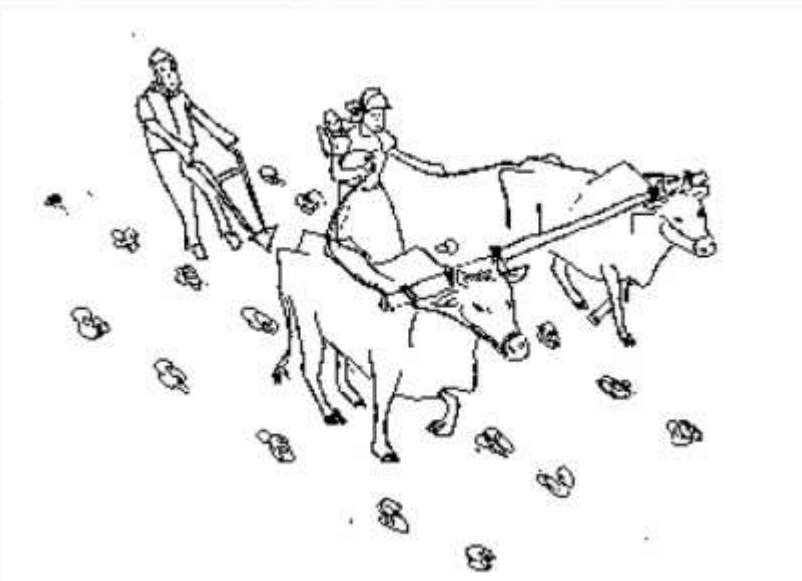
These exercises are done in the field, 2 hours per day, for 7-14 days.

### **Note:**

Frequent rest should be allowed for the animals on training

# STEP 4: Pulling Implements

Implements such as ploughs, weeders, planters, etc, are introduced in this step.



This can be done for 3-4 hours per day for 3 days.

# Use of voice commands

Meaning of command	Local command to be used
Come here!	Aa! Aa!
Walk!	Hat! Hat!
Stop!	Row ! Row!
Reverse!	
Go straight ahead!	
Turn right!	Da! Da!
Turn left!	Tha! Tha!

# Use of voice commands

Other commands can be added with more experienced animals, amongst which the following may be needed:

"Get into the corral!"

"Go home!"

"Close up!"

"Lift your leg!"

"Follow the furrow!"

"Come for the yoke!"

# Thank You

