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Efficient Livestock and Profits from Farming with a Special Reference to Economical Pork Production

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EFFICIENT LIVESTOCK AND PROFITS FROM FARMING

with special reference to

ECONOMICAL PORK PRODUCTION

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Sales of livestock and of livestock products constitute an important part of the receipts on most South Dakota farms. Records on 126 farms in Brown and Jones Counties in 1921 show that in Brown County 37 per cent and in Jones County 80 per cent of the cash receipts were from these sources. South Dakota is so far from the terminal markets that nearly all of the roughage and a large part of the coarse grain produced in the State is fed to livestock and marketed in the form of beef, pork, butterfat and eggs. It follows that, on any particular farm, the productiveness of the livestock, or the efficiency with which they convert feed-stuffs into marketable food is an important factor affecting profits.

How may we increase the productiveness or efficiency of our livestock and by so doing increase our profits from the farm as a whole? Instead of discussing this question in a general way for all classes of livestock, let us confine ourselves to the hog enterprise. This will make it possible to be much more definite in our statements than would otherwise be true.

Studies that have been made of the cost of producing pork show us that there is no set, standard or definite cost. In fact the cost is not exactly the same on any two farms. In a recent study of 20 farms in Minnesota one man produced 100 pounds of live hog with 308 pounds of grain and 203 pounds of skimmilk. A neighbor of his required 787 pounds of grain and 302 pounds of skimmilk. Another study of 51 droves of hogs in Iowa and Illinois in 1921 shows that "the cost of producing 100 pounds of pork varied from $3.76 on the farm making cheapest pork to $10.48 on

the farm having the highest cost. Ten farms made pork costing less than $5 a hundred. On 16 farms the cost ranged from $5 to $6 a hundred, on 14 farms from $6 to $7, and on the remaining 11 farms the cost was over $7 for each 100 pounds grown." There is a wide variation in the productiveness of different droves of hogs as well as in the feed, care and management which they receive. Four ways of lowering costs and thereby increasing the spread between cost and selling price and the chances for profit are:

1. Feeding for economical production,
2. Raising larger litters,
3. Reducing losses from diseases and parasites, and
4. Marketing at proper time and weight.

Feeding for Economical Production

It takes cheap feed to make cheap pork. Corn is the chief feed used in pork production and South Dakota ranks tenth among the States in the production of corn. Moreover, South Dakota is a long distance from the terminal markets and over much of the State it is difficult for farmers to sell their corn as grain in competition with other farmers nearer the central markets. However, hogs are much less bulky than corn, and South Dakota hogs do compete on very favorable terms with those raised in other states. South Dakota farmers should be able to feed corn to hogs at a profit if it can be done in any part of the country.

Pasture furnishes one of the cheapest hog feeds which we have. A good alfalfa or clover pasture is almost a necessity in economical hog production.

Plenty of fresh water should be available at all times if best results are to be obtained.

There should be enough protein (bone and muscle-building material) in the ration to make for healthy development. Legume pastures, skimmilk and tankage furnish this sort of feed.

Experiments with hogging-off corn, with self-feeders and with concrete feeding-floors near the corn crib, show that it pays to feed a hog all he will eat. If growth is checked by lack of feed, the chances for profit are lessened.

Large Litters Mean Low Costs

The report on the cost of producing pork on 51 farms in Iowa and Illinois in 1921 above referred to shows that "the cost of producing a weaned pig varied from $2.73 in the breeding herd having the lowest cost per pig to $10.16 per weaned pig in the drove having the highest cost for each pig. The size of litters at weaning time was one of the most important factors in determining the cost and varies from two pigs in one drove to eight pigs in each of the two droves weaning the largest litters. Nine droves weaning less than four pigs to the sow showed an average pig cost of $6.70; twenty-one droves, weaning from four to six pigs, cost $4.76 per pig; eighteen droves, weaning between six and eight pigs, $4.27. The average cost was $4.50."

This means that the sows that farrowed and raised the most pigs per litter, did so at the lowest cost per pig. These sows were nearly always tried sows that were used in the breeding herd because their previous litters had been large. The number of pigs saved was largely determined by the condition of the farrowing quarters and care in handling the sow and her new pigs.

Death Losses Increase Costs

The average death loss in the 51 herds referred to above was 34 percent. Out of every 1000 pigs farrowed, 340 died before they

were ten weeks of age. Most of these losses were due to careless management and feeding of the breeding herd. Ways of lessening these losses will no doubt be suggested by listing the specific causes as shown in the report.

Causes	Average number deaths among 1000 pigs farrowed.
Laid on by sows	93.6
Farrowed dead	50
Farrowed weak	40.5
Necrotic-enteritis	35.9
Premature birth	33.8
Starved	21.5
Scours	18
Chilled	16.7
Eaten by sows	13.3
Sore mouth	6.2
Miscellaneous	10.6
Total deaths in 1000 pigs before weaning time.....	340.1

Ways should be found to lessen this high mortality among little pigs, for, as we have seen, the larger the litter weaned, the less the cost per pig and the greater the chance for profit. In contrast to these heavy losses among little pigs, we find only 4.8 per cent of deaths in the breeding herd and among pigs after weaning time.

Weight and Time of Selling

Another important factor affecting profits from hog raising is the weight at which the hogs are sold. The market lately has paid a premium for light-weight hogs. Pigs that are farrowed in a warm hog house early in the spring, grown out on alfalfa pasture with plenty of skimmilk and a little grain, turned into standing corn and finished with two or three weeks in the dry lot, should weigh 225 pounds at 7½ months. This is a good time to sell them. Gains made after 225 pounds is reached cost more than gains made before that time. Moreover, the market is usually better then (early in the fall) than it is at my

other time during the year.

Conclusion

The average production of butterfat per cow in South Dakota is about 135 pounds, barely enough to pay the cost of feed and shelter. And yet there are herds averaging well over 300 pounds per cow and showing a good profit on the feed and labor consumed. The average hen in South Dakota lays only 55 eggs per year, yet there are flocks where the average production is from 90 to 120 eggs per fowl. Further studies indicate that the statement made at the beginning of this article will hold true for all classes of livestock, namely, that profits from livestock are dependent upon the productiveness and efficiency of the stock and upon the care and management which they receive. It also follows that profits from livestock directly affect the profits from the farm as a whole.

Suggested topics for discussion at club meetings:

1. "A" type hog houses versus colony houses.
2. The use of self-feeders.
3. Concrete feeding-floors.
4. Hogging-off corn.
5. Use of soy beans with corn for hogging-off
6. Use of mineral mixtures.
7. Skimmilk as a substitute for tankage.