Raising Fine Hogs in the Northwest

Some Ideas on the Best Way to Breed and Produce the Farmers' Mortgage Lifters.

FINELY-BRED POLAND CHINA BOAR.

This is the second of a series of articles by two men well informed upon what the hog can do for the Northwest.

BY JAMES E. WITHYCOME AND E. L. POTTER.

IT IS impossible in this article to go extensively into the various theories of breeding and of heredity. A few fundamental truths in the principles of breeding will be given. First, "like begets like." Pigs of the right class can be produced if the right class of boars and sows are used and if (note the "if") the ancestors of the boar and sows are also of this type.

There is no other safe rule to follow. There is no mysterious secret known only to the elect.

There is no way in which to control the sex of the offspring. Sudden frights, or other vivid mental impressions received by the female during pregnancy or at the time of service do not affect the offspring. The first male to which the female is bred does not in any whatever affect the offspring produced later by a different male. There are volumes written on the subject, but the statements given cover most of the facts which are of practical value to the breeder.

Time For Farrowing.

The most desirable time of the year in most parts of the state for a sow to farrow is in March, with the exception of some of the colder and more exposed places, where April or even May is more desirable. The breeders should therefore be careful about the time of breeding, in order that the pigs may come when wanted, and above all, so that they may know just when the pigs will come, and so be able to prepare for them. By far the best way is to keep the boar in a separate enclosure and take the sow to him when she is in season. One service at one period of heat is ample, more would be exhausting the procreative powers of the boar to no purpose. The sow carries her young about 112 days, but may vary somewhat from this.

The periods of heat last about three days, and recur about every three weeks.

After the sow is bred she should be kept on a moderate ration which will keep her in good average condition, unless she is immature, when she should be kept growing nicely. Mature swine of all kinds are generally supposed to maintain a constant weight, and neither gain nor lose to any appreciable extent when fed a ration of one per cent of their live weight per head per day in grain or grain equivalent. A 350-pound sow would therefore be expected to hold her own on 3 1-2 pounds of grain per day, or the equivalent thereof.

It is not, however, desirable to feed so small a ration of grain alone, as there is no enough bulk to properly distend the digestive organs, and the animal will therefore constantly crave more feed. In the West kale or roots or vetch hay, together with about one or one and a half pounds of grain per day will constitute a good ration. In the eastern part of the Northwest alfalfa hay and about one pound of barley per day will be sufficient. Sows are often maintained on less than this amount of grain, especially during the first part of the period of pregnancy.

The hay used should be of good quality and especially fine in texture. Small racks similar to those used for feeding cattle are sometimes used, but many farmers feed the hay in troughs or on the floor and do not require the hogs to clean up the coarse stems, but take them out and use for bedding or feed for other stock.

Where many horses are kept the best possible plan is to feed the hogs the fine stems and heads with accumulate in the bottoms of the mangers. This is much better than the hay direct from the stack. Common red clover will do just as well in every way as alfalfa when cured under similar conditions, many claiming it is better.

Grinding alfalfa for hogs is not usually a good practice, and costs more than is gained. Alfalfa is especially good for brood sows, as it has plenty of bulk and above all, because it contains the protein and mineral matter necessary for the proper development of the litter without too great a tendency to fatten.

On a ration of barley, which is sometimes fed, the sow must have enough to make her fat, sometimes too fat, in order to get enough portein and mineral matter to properly develop the pigs. Skim milk is another good feed for sows, and should be fed about as liberally as the supply will admit.

Foods Are Compared.

In estimating the amounts required for maintaining sows about 2 1-2 to 3 pounds of milk or alfalfa will take the place of one pound of grain. One quart of milk weighs about two pounds, one quart of wheat nearly two pounds, of oats one pound, of barley one and a half pounds.

While the estimate of one per cent of the live weight per day is about as accurate an average maintenance as can be given, similar results will not be obtained in all cases, especially where hay or milk of variable quality is substituted for the grain, and the ration will therefore often need to be varied according to the condition of the sow.

Some people have a great fear of excessive fat on a brood sow. This is a mistake, for while sows may be injured by excessive fat, a great many more are injured by excessive leanness, and where the sows are excessively fat the damage more often comes through having been fattened on feed with too much of a fattening tendency, and not enough protein and mineral matter.

The feeds which are unusually well supplied with these elements are alfalfa, clover, vetch, peas, skim milk, shorts, tankage and kale. Of the grains, wheat and oats have a fair amount, while barley is somewhat deficient. Roots of all kinds, while having a good influence upon the digestive system and being in many ways especially good for brood sows, are not as good for building bone and muscle as the other feeds mentioned and when fed should be supplemented with feed having an abundance of protein and mineral matter.

Care should be taken that the sow is not constipated. If there is a tendency in this direction give more laxative food. Roots, kale, alfalfa and bran have a laxative tendency. Do not wait until the sow is about ready to farrow before seeing to her physical condition.

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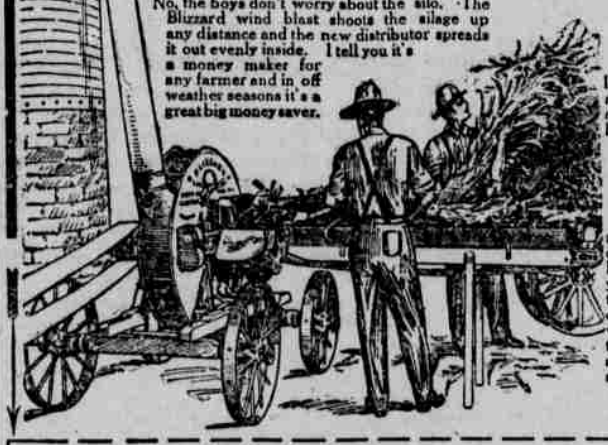

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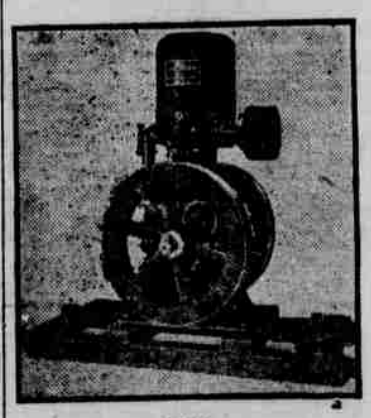

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