Raising Fine Hogs in the Northwest

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

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

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AFTER the growing period the pigs should be put on a full ration and fattened for market as rapidly as possible. This fattening period will last about 60 days, and at the end of this time the pigs should weigh about 200 pounds, which is the most salable weight in this state. After this weight the gains are slower and more expensive, and the price per pound received for the animal will be less, hence the total profit to the grower will be less. As pigs are ordinarily handled the growing season will come at the time of the best pasture, and by the time they are ready to fatten the pastures will be short and dry and will furnish but little feed.

The fattening pigs do not need much exercise, so it is well to put them in comparatively small pens and feed grain, supplemented with skim milk, tankage, middlings or some similar feed. A little rich, green alfalfa pasture, such as is found in many places in Eastern Oregon and Eastern Washington, will be very satisfactory, but the pastures of Western Oregon and Western Washington, especially those found in the latter end of the season when the pigs are ready to fatten, are of little value except for growing pigs and stock hogs. Rape properly cultivated, however, will furnish a good pasture late in the season.

Wheat and Barley.

The grains that are used for fattening are largely wheat and barley. Pound for pound these two are about equal. The one chosen should therefore depend upon the market price. In some places and in some years a little corn may be used. Corn also has about the same value as wheat, pound for pound, the preference, if any, being for the corn, if it is properly supplemented. None of these feeds should be fed alone, but supplemented with a small amount of some such feed as skim milk or tankage. The pigs will eat more, will go off feed less readily, will gain faster and take less feed per pound of gain when so fed. Of all the supplements which may be used skim milk and tankage are the best. It is hard to say which is the better, not considering price. Ten pounds of milk per day per pig should be about right. If tankage is used about one-half pound per day per pig would give about the same results as the ten pounds of skim milk, although perhaps a trifle more grain would be used by the tankage hogs; say one-half pound more grain per day.

On this basis one pound of tankage and one pound of grain would be equal to 20 pounds of skim milk. In experiments at the Oregon experiment station, where pigs were fed on this basis, practically the same gains were obtained. Also from the standpoint of the chemical nutrients contained the two would be about equal. Tankage will cost in ton lots about 2½c per pound. On this basis skim milk would be worth a little less than 20c per hundred pounds, or roughly, about 1¾c per gallon. Where these supplements must be purchased they may be purchased on this basis. In most cases, however, the skim milk will be a home product and would otherwise be largely wasted, but the tankage must be purchased.

Grain Feeding.

In comparing the feeding of grain alone with grain supplemented with skim milk or tankage, the results are in favor of the supplements. Experiments at the Oregon experiment station, where grain feeding has been compared with grain and skim milk, have shown that 100 pounds of skim milk have saved from 20 to 50 pounds of grain, more commonly about 30 to 40 pounds. One hundred pounds of tankage have saved about 400 pounds of grain. A dollar inveseted in tankage at 1¾c per pound, or in skim milk at 20c per hundred pounds will thus usually save from $1.50 to $2.00, and in some cases even more. It must be understood that this saving applies only where limited amounts of such feeds are given in connection with grain. If these supplemental feeds were to take the place of the entire amount of grain no such saving would result; instead the pigs would probably go off feed and the results would be entirely unsatisfactory. The reason for this is that grain, as wheat or barley, supplemented as mentioned, makes a well balanced ration. It is appetizing and suited to the pig's digestive system, and contains the proper amount of the nutriments which the pig needs. Grain alone, or skim milk or tankage alone, will not meet all of these requirements.

There are other feeds which may be used as a supplement to wheat or barley with good effect. The best of these is middlings. Where middlings are fed from one-fourth to one-third of the ration should be of this feed. When fed in this way good results can be expected, and it will be found that the middlings will save much more than their own weight in grain. When used in this way middlings will be worth from $2.00 to $2.00 per ton more than wheat, barley or corn, and may be purchased on this basis.

Tankage Not Advised.

As to using more than one of these supplements at once, we would not recommend the purchase of tankage when skim milk is abundant, and not ordinarily when middlings are cheap. Both middlings and skim milk may be fed to advantage to hogs of any age, but especially to sows suckling young pigs and to growing pigs from one to four months old. Shorts may be used in place of middlings if of similar composition. Some shorts are about the same as middlings, while in other cases they are the same as bran.

Bran is a bulky feed and contains so much fiber that its use for pigs is not recommended, and its value for dairy cows makes the price too high to justify its use for pigs. Alfalfa, vetch or clover hay, which is especially valuable for stock hogs in winter, has little value for fattening hogs, and its use for this purpose is not recommended. The same may be said of kale and roots.

Oats are very good for pregnant sows, but have too much bulk for the best results with other stock. Sheaf grain is very good, but much better results are secured if it is threshed. Experiments conducted at the Oregon experiment station some years since showed plainly that the waste of feeding sheaf grain amounted to a great deal more than the cost of threshing. In some places the hogs are allowed to run in the field of uncut grain, or to "hog it down" as it is called.

There is of course no expense to this method, the waste is comparatively small, and the indications are that the practice is one that may well be extended. There is not sufficient conclusive evidence on the subject at hand, however, to unqualified recommend the practice, but it is suggested that growers try it on a small scale, especially in the dry farming sections, and on grain that is too short to harvest by the usual methods.

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