

Information on Raising Hogs in Northwest

Why Men Who Try to Raise Hogs on Pasture Alone Frequently Become Discouraged.



Herd of Swine, Following the Large Combines, Fatten on Grain Which Is Otherwise Wasted.

The following is a verbatim report of an address made by Byron Hunter, vice director of the state bureau of farm development, to a meeting of Eastern Washington swine producers.

HOG-RAISERS quite frequently make one of two mistakes; a frequent one being the trying to make a hog on pasture alone. In my work among hog-raisers, I have noticed the men who are enthusiastic and are not discouraged about the business, are those who feed a liberal grain ration along with pasturage. The man who is trying to make the hog grow on pasturage alone almost invariably is discouraged. He says there is nothing in it, and he is right. There is nothing in raising hogs that way.

Then, again, in order to economically produce pork, we must prepare crops that the hog can handle himself. If we expect a hog to eat a large quantity of pasturage, it must be attractive. It is better to have the pasture cut up in several lots, feeding first in one and then the other. In this way the hog can be started in a clean, fresh pasture. Better results are obtained in that way. Also, handled in that way, the pasture will handle a much larger number of stock per acre.

In studying the use of different crops in connection with the production of hogs in the states of Idaho, Oregon and Washington, I have become very favorably impressed with the results obtained where the hogs are allowed to do their own harvesting.

For instance, the average cost of husking and cribbing a fifty or sixty bushel crop of corn is about five cents per bushel. As the yield decreases, the cost per bushel increases. It costs from twenty to forty cents a bushel to harvest and market wheat in the wheat belt. The cost varies with the yield, the method of harvesting, threshing, the distance to market and so on. Naturally when the crop is hogged off these expenses are very materially reduced.

Crops That Are Suitable.

Then again, most of the crops that are suitable for hogging-off are utilized during the busy season of the year when it is very desirable that the hog has as little attention as possible, the farmers being busy in other directions. The vegetable matter in the soil is materially increased by being broken up and tramped in by the pigs, making plowing under easier. The droppings of the animals are quite evenly distributed over the field, whereas, in feeding lots or pens the manure is deposited about the feeding places. Hogging-off a crop also gives the pig exercise, and compels him to chew his feed much better than when the threshed grain is fed.

Following I shall give the results of my observations in the use of different crops used for hogging-off in the states of my territory, and some of the results obtained in this practice.

Winter wheat is a pasture crop suitable in the more humid parts of the wheat belts of Idaho, Oregon and Washington. Planted early in September—depending upon the rains—this crop is used for pasturage approximately from October 15 to November 15; and, in the spring following, from March 15 until about June 1. Clover planted the previous year is used April 10th to December 1st. Alfalfa planted the previous year is used from April 15th to November

15th. Kale and rape planted in April or May are used June 15th to December 15th. Winter wheat sown early in May is used June 1st to November 15th. Wheat sown in corn at the last cultivation of the corn is used September 15th to November 15th. The stubblefield may be used from the time the crop is off, about August 1st, till the ground is worked the following spring.

Now, as to winter feeds to be used in connection with grain:

Prominent among these is found alfalfa hay and the root crops—artichokes, carrots, turnips and the like. Wheat often is fed in the straw—in bundles or in other unthreshed forms. Alfalfa hay is fed either in ricks or run through the chopper, soaked for twelve hours, and mixed with grain—rolled wheat, barley or whatever may be used. White French sugar beets, mangels, carrots and the like as mentioned, form a succulent part of a ration, the grain being fed in addition to the roots. Artichokes are used mainly in the late fall after alfalfa and clover cease to furnish pasturage and until the ground is frozen up; then, again in the early spring, as soon as the frost is out of the ground and the soil settled. The hogs root the artichokes out. All hogs used for breeding purposes can be carried through the winter just as well on unthreshed wheat or field peas.

Crops Used for Hogging-Off.

Winter wheat planted early in September or October should be ready about July 10th to September 1st. If one has not winter wheat, beardless barley sown in the early spring can be used from July 10th to the beginning of the winter rains, or until the stubblefield is open. Field peas sown in the early spring is ready about July 15th, or can be used from July 15 to November 1st. Spring wheat would be ready July 25 to September 15. Corn planted May 1st to 20th would be used September 1 to November 15.

Blue barley sown in the early spring and allowed to stand in the field until the fall rains have softened it can be used during the late fall and winter.

All of the uses of different forage crops and grain I have mentioned are found now actually in use in the three states named, over which the rainfall averages from 20 to 25 inches.

To show that it is feasible to use these crops in this way, Mr. Hunter cited a number of demonstrations which have been performed under his direction by different farmers.

Mr. W. H. Steen, of Umatilla county, Oregon, hogged off eleven acres of wheat that was seeded on a side hill which was too steep to permit the operation of harvesting machinery upon it, in March, 1910. This land had never been farmed before. When the wheat was in the stiff dough, July 17, ninety head of hogs were weighed and turned into the field. When they had cleaned up the field, August 24th, they were again weighed. The gain was 160 pounds per acre. At nine cents a pound—the price of pork at that time—the net profit per acre for the standing grain was \$14.40. This was on land that previously had produced only a little early spring pasture.

Utilizing Stump Land.

These same hogs were weighed and turned into 178 acres of stubblefield that had been cut with a combined harvester. The land was level and a good job of harvesting had been done. While in the field the hogs made a gain of 11.73 pounds per acre. At nine cents

a pound this amounts to \$1.05 an acre. In harvesting grain on steep land the waste is frequently as much as ten times more than that on the land owned by Mr. Steen upon which this experiment was made. The profits of cleaning a field with hogs would be in proportion to the waste.

In the fall of 1910 Mr. Steen also hogged off 11.43 acres of standing barley. This was also seeded on virgin steep side hill. The barley was allowed to stand in the field until the fall rains had softened the kernels. Eighty head of hogs were weighed and turned into the field. During November they gained from the 11.43 acres 201 pounds per acre, worth eight cents a pound—a gain from the barley, per acre, of \$16.08.

Mr. Hunter claims that there are thousands of acres of steep side hill land in the wheat belts of Washington, Idaho and Oregon that could be used in the way above indicated to economically and profitably produce pork. In order to get an accurate comparison of the results obtained from hogging off certain crops and from harvesting similar ones, Mr. Hunter had arranged a demonstration on the farm of Mr. M. E. Schreck, of western Whitman county, Washington. In July, Mr. Schreck fenced off 7 3/16 acres of standing wheat of his main wheat field. When the wheat was in the stiff dough he weighed and turned in 109 head of hogs on July 30th. August 17, when they had cleaned up the field they were reweighed, the gain per acre being 235 1/2 pounds per acre. The cost of putting in and taking out the fence, allowing one-tenth for depreciation of the fence, and the cost of hauling the hogs to market amounted to \$1.48 per acre. Allowing eight cents per pound for pork the gain was \$18.82 per acre. Deducting the expense items for fencing and marketing left a net gain per acre from the standing grain when hogged off of \$7.34 per acre.

The rest of the field was harvested and hauled to the warehouse, and there, the receipts showed a yield of 184 bushels per acre. At 69 cents per bushel—the price of wheat at that time—this acreage yield was worth \$12.77. Deducting the cost of heading, threshing, sacks and hauling amounted to \$5.17 per acre, leaving a net return of \$7.60 per acre for the wheat when harvested instead of being hogged off.

It should be said, however, that these hogs had access to some green food, alfalfa and sorghum.

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