

Making Money with Beef

THAT the present beef shortage is very great none can doubt. Hogs and sheep are also correspondingly diminishing in numbers on the farms of this country. This situation has taken place during the past few years in the face of constantly rising prices for cattle, hogs and sheep on foot. Only a few years ago beef cattle commanded only 5 and 6 cents a pound and hogs only 4 and 5 cents a pound, the latter frequently falling near the 3-cent line. Lambs then at certain seasons sold for only \$1.50 apiece.

But why should farmers in general abandon beef, hog and sheep raising when every year they received higher prices for them? There are fewer enthusiastic stockmen today, with beef cattle around 9 and 10 cents a pound, hogs hovering close around the 9-cent mark continually and lambs bringing about 8 cents on an average for all seasons of the year. It would seem that with the present better prices there would be a heavy stimulus to the stock raising business and that farmers would turn all their efforts to growing meat animals for the hungry markets. Such, however, is not the case.

Meat and Business.

Business generally over the United States is good, from reports and appearances, but business would be much better if more meat animals were grown and marketed. High-priced meats do not mean more profits to farmers, packers and retailers. Packers make their big money on a big volume of business, and their volume of business is very small at present. Stockyards companies likewise are prosperous when they handle heavy car loads and train loads of market animals, which they are not doing at present. Packers, live stock commission firms and stock yards firms are experiencing as hard times right now, owing to curtailed trading, as farmers in drought-stricken areas. They have reduced operations considerably by cutting down their working forces, and many are ready to abandon their business for other lines where trade is more enterprising.

Live stock yards, live stock commission firms and packing firms represent a total of an immense business capitalization in this country. When these firms are doing large business, money circulates more freely through many hands. Their employes number up into the tens of thousands when business is good, but when business is bad, as it is at present, a large share of these employes are out of employment.

Mutual Prosperity.

Of all the evil things that have been said about packers, their prosperity and the prosperity of farmers and stockmen is mutual. If the one succeeds, the other is bound to share in the success. They can not get rich in handling a few animals; neither can the farmer. Business must be done on a large scale to make profits attractive.

The present scarcity of meat animals is the cause of almost unprecedented prices of retail meats, as packers and dealers must ask more for the finished product in order to remain in business and live. Consumers of meats and meat animal products have reduced their purchases to the lowest minimum, buying other food substitutes, with many being compelled to do without. When meat and lard go above a certain price, a large share of consumers can not afford to buy. They must eat cheaper and commoner foods in order to make their incomes meet all necessary living ends. All these things tend to stagnate general prosperity both in cities and in the country.

Good Cattle Scarce.

So scarce are good beef cattle, and so high the price that one of the largest packing firms in this country has purchased a large tract of land, to be devoted exclusively to beef cattle breeding, growing and finishing. The work is to be conducted along the most approved

scientific agricultural lines. The calves will be raised and the feed for them will be grown, as far as possible, on the farm. It is predicted that the shortage of beef animals will compel other packing firms also to become producers of meat animals. If they can see money in the business, why should not farmers? Will the farmers sit idly at home and allow packers to come out into the country and beat them at their own farming game? Some will, and some will take the hint and begin to breed and stock up to meet the present urgent demands for good beef animals. The general farmer ought to be in a position to grow and finish beef cattle cheaper than packing firms can. Time will tell.

Of late years the price of corn has advanced even greater proportionately than meat animals. Many who fed their grain to live stock a few years ago now sell the grain direct. This, no doubt, is one of the greatest reasons why farmers have decreased their live stock operations. They can secure more cash in hand for their grain and hay on the open market than they can realize for them through beef cattle feeding. Present gains are greater through straight grain farming. They do not stop to consider the future.

The Profitable Side.

With good beef breeds and the best of handling and with balanced rations, the net profit on a single finished steer is but \$10 to \$15, often less. The average farmer considers that he had worked for nothing when he puts \$100 in feeds into a steer that will sell for only \$110. But the profitable side of beef growing, or the growing and feeding of any animals on the farm, comes through marketing the home-grown feeds through the animals in a condensed form and the securing of manure as a valuable by-product. Considering the future good of the farm, the farm owner can well afford to put \$100 in feeds into a beef steer that sells at maturity for only \$100.

In this way he has received full cash market price for his feeds without hauling them to market, and in addition he has received in the neighborhood of from \$20 to \$25 in manure, which is banked in the soil, to be drawn upon later. The farmer to make money with beef steers and beef cattle in general must handle them on a comparatively large scale, consistent with the size of his farm, and he must purchase and use concentrates to balance his home-grown feeds. Cattle feeding is a means of marketing the field products economically, and of fertilizing the fields at the same time for growing larger and better crops.—H. P. W.

A DAIRYMAN with a poor herd receives quite a large check at the end of the month and he may fail to distinguish between receipts and net profit. This delusion has been the cause of many a failure.

All over this country are individual dairymen whose success is noticeable. One dairyman lost a 120-acre farm in keeping 20 cows that produced two to four cans of milk per day, hiring two men.

His successor on the same farm hired three men, kept 63 cows and produced 30 cans of milk per day during the flush of the season, one month's return being \$840. This is an example of brain fertility and not soil fertility.

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