Information on Raising Hogs in Northwest

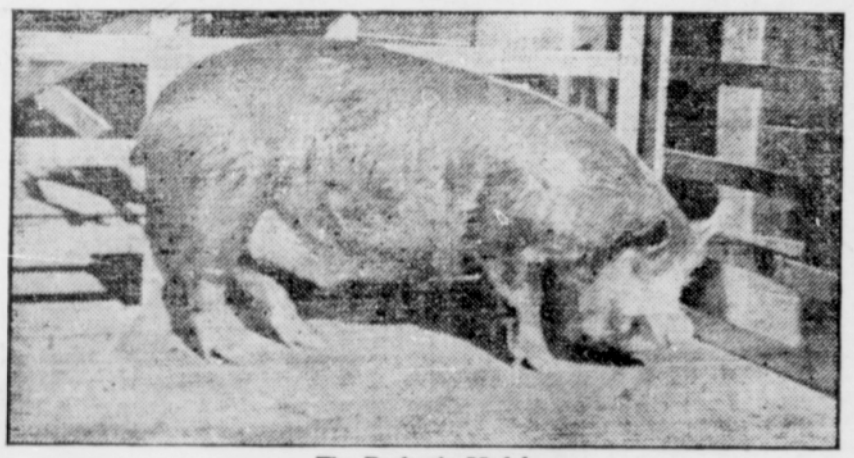
Greatest Returns Per Dollar of Investment When Kept on Diversified Farms.

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

By JAMES E. WITHYCOMBE and E. L. POTTER.

HOGS may be sold to to local butchers, to buyers who will ship them by the carload to Portland, or they may be shipped direct by the owner to Portland. Whenever the hog supply is insufficient to meet the local demands the local price will usually be more than the Portland price, otherwise the butchers pay about the shipping price. Shippers buy small lots from the different growers and ship in carloads. They expect, of course, to make a profit and such profit is legitimate and permissible. If the farmer has a carload of his own it will in most cases pay better to ship them himself. If he does get more than the shipper it will be because his judgment was better than the shipper's, which is not usually the case.

Cattle and sheep are usually sold "shrunk"; that is, they are either weighed full of feed and docked about four or five per cent, or they are kept off of feed and water for twelve hours. Hogs, however, are ordinarily sold "full," that is, just as they come from the feed lot. When, however, they are hauled or driven a considerable distance before being weighed, there will be some shrink as compared with the weights upon leaving the feed lots. Occasionally buyers have gone into places where hog raising was new and the farmers were unfamiliar with the business, and made the sellers believe it was customary to dock or shrink the hogs a certain per cent. This is, of course, pure graft.



The Packer's Model.

Paying for Exact Weight.

It is customary for the buyer to pay exactly what the hogs weigh when delivered. The place where they are weighed will, of course, be subject to mutual agreement. This "shrink" in the case of cattle or sheep is supposed to cover to an extent the shrinkage which occurs in transit from the shipping point to the larger market. Even when bought with a shrink of five per cent, cattle and sheep will not weigh as much when they reach Portland or Seattle as at the shipping point.

Good cattle shipped from Corvallis to Portland, a distance of about one hundred miles, shrink approximately 50 pounds per head from their shrunk weight at starting, thin cattle even more. On longer hauls the shrink is greater, but not in proportion. Hogs, on the other hand, weighed in the feed lot at Corvallis and shipped to Portland will shrink but little, even though their Corvallis weight is not "docked." In case the hogs are hauled in from the country a few miles and weighed in town they will weigh as much when they arrive in Portland as at Corvallis. On a longer haul there will be some shrink, but most of the shrink comes in the first two hundred miles. Hogs will often go 1500 miles on a five or six per cent shrink.

Freight rates in this country are quoted on the basis of a carload, the car being 36 feet 6 inches long. Such a car, if single deck, will hold about one hundred 200 pound hogs. The double-deck cars have just twice the room, but it is not customary to load twice as heavy.

Selling Dressed Hogs.

Occasionally farmers find it advisable to sell dressed hogs to the local trade. Well finished hogs, weighing approximately two hundred pounds, should dress from 75 to 80 per cent. Hogs dressing over this amount must be heavy, fat and fairly well shrunk before butchering. Hogs dressing under 75 per cent are thin or washy, and perhaps have been fed on an excess of thin or sloppy feeds. Younger hogs always dress less than older ones. With these figures in mind it is not difficult to estimate whether the advantage lies with selling the hogs dressed or on foot. For instance, if good 200 pound hogs are selling for 7 1-2 cents and can be weighed direct from the feed lot they will bring $15.00 per head. The same hogs dressed will weigh 150 pounds each, and in order to bring $15.00 must sell for 10 cents per pound. This will allow no profit on the work of dressing. If, however, they can be sold for 10½ cents, 75c per head will be received for the dressing.

The best source of information will be found in close observation of the results obtained in the farmer's own herd. Close observation means no guess work, but requires that the feed and the pigs both be weighed from time to time in order that both the gains and the feed per pound gain may be accurately determined. Even then the observation must be extended over a large number of instances and through a considerable length of time.

A Common Fault.

A most common fault is to make sweeping statements on the basis of very limited observations. One man has a Berkshire sow that has only three pigs. He therefore says: "Berkshires are no good; they have only a few pigs to the litter," when the facts are that the Berkshire is one of the most prolific breeds. There is no rule in stock growing to which there is no exception; in fact, the so-called rules are statements of averages. When it is said the Berkshire breed is prolific it is not meant that all sows of that breed have large liters, but that the average size of the Berkshire litter is quite satisfactory. When the statement is made that the usual amount of grain required per hundred pound gain on fattening pigs is about 450 pounds, it should be borne in mind that over half the pigs fed will miss that mark by at least 25 pounds, one way or the other, but when a large number is fed the average will come close to that figure.

Another good source of information is to watch the practices of neighbors. Proper methods can be learned from the successful growers, and methods to be avoided from the unsuccessful. It will also be found helpful to watch hogs slaughtered and cut up, and a trip to the Portland stock yards and packing plants would be especially valuable. A trip to Portland will be of more benefit than to the large Chicago yards, since Portland is the logical market for Oregon hogs, and when hogs are sold to local butchers the price is based on Portland prices.

As a second source of information, books and papers are recommended. The best all around book on hogs is "Swine in America," by F. D. Coburn, the Secretary of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture. This book gives complete and accurate information on the various breeds, breeding, judging, marketing, general care and management and feeding. Data from all of the important bulletins on hogs issued by the various experiment stations are summarized and put in readable form in this book. It may be obtained from the Orange Judd Company, New York, for $2.50 postpaid. "Judging Live Stock," by John A. Craig, gives the best information on judging hogs, together with similar information concerning the judging of all other kinds of live stock. This book is one of the first that any farmer should buy. It may be obtained from The Breeder's Gazette, Chicago, Ill., for $1.50 postpaid.

There are a number of books which contain valuable information on hog raising, but practically all of this information is included in the books mentioned.

Water for Hogs.

It is important that hogs be supplied with an abundance of drinking water. This, however, does not mean that it is absolutely necessary to have running water, or even the proverbial hog wallow, but clean drinking water should be within their reach at all times.

In the strictly dry farming sections the question of water supply is frequently a serious one, especially where it has to be hauled for any considerable distance. The average hog will consume about ten pounds of water daily, thus the hauling from distant points will entail some expense, in fact, it may be so much as to preclude the successful growing of hogs. When water is scarce and difficult to obtain watering devices which reduce the waste to the minimum should be provivded. One form consists of a covered wooden trough with holes in the cover just large enough to admit the hog's mouth, or constructed in such a manner that will prevent the hog from putting his feet in the water. Another device consists of a square, tight bottom trough about six inches deep and just large enough for a barrel standing on an end to fit snugly. A hole is bored on the side near the bottom, and one on the upper end, the barrel is filled with water, the end plugged and the plug on the side removed. The water will flow from the barrel automatically as it is consumed by the hogs. In refilling the plugs are reversed. The barrel and trough should be secured solidly so the hogs may not root them over.

Methods of Successful Growers.

At the request of the Director of this station, the following methods have been kindly furnished:

Mr. A. A. Bonney, Tygh Valley, writes that he wintered 10 brood sows upon alfalfa hay without supplementary feed, and that they brought good litters of strong, healthy pigs. It was estimated that those sows would consume about ten pounds of hay each per day.

Mr. H. W. Strong, Moro, who is recognized as a very successful farmer and hog grower, writes:

"For spring and summer pasture I sow fall and spring wheat; for fall pasture, grow corn, milo maize and sorghum. I think milo maize will prove a very profitable green food crop in this section, especially for pasture. As for fattening hogs, I use self-feeders and place them in the pastures, and for winter feed threshed and unthreshed grain."

Mr. C. J. Quinn, Mayville, who is one of the pioneer and most successful hog growers of that section, writes:

"In wintering hogs of all kinds they are allowed the run of the stubble fields, and after the rains graze on the volunteer grain. The careful hog man will give them a feed once a day of whole wheat to bring them home; night is the usual time. A little more care is taken of the brood sows which are expected to have a litter, but many do not go to much trouble in this respect, allowing them to find a place in which to have their young, mostly an old straw stack. The sows are driven home as soon as practicable after farrowing, so that the coyotes do not get too large a percentage of the pigs. These sows are fed wheat or barley, whole or chopped as the owner may happed to have. The hogs intended for sale usually have the run of the stubble fields until the best has been gotten, then they are confined in a feed lot and fed wheat or barley chop in self-feeders, allowing them to eat all they want until they are ready for market. Some shelter of some kind is generally provided so they can get in out of the storms.

"Summering hogs as a general rule consists in turning them loose to prey upon anything and everything they can find, no matter to whom it may belong. This is what has brought the hog industry into such disrepute in this locality. The man who has hogs and who has any respect for his neighbors, sows a pasture of fall wheat or rye, wheat preferred, into which he turns his hogs and supplements this with a feed of grain once a day. If given plenty of pasture they will do well. This continues until harvest when the yare turned into the stubble fields. Of course, where the farmer has alfalfa he uses that with a small ration of grain. The great drawback is the want of more bulky feed than grain to bring hogs to maturity. Farmers who have been most successful are those who are able to buy thin hogs, raised by men who had farms in the timber and could let their sows run at large and bring in a litter, but who did not raise grain wherewith to fatten the pigs. These hogs were bought in the fall and put on the stubble and fed chop until sold."

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