Rancher's Report

By BILL DECKER

The story of 2,025 pigs is recounted in the National Live Stock Producer.

It seems that a reporter turned in a story to the editor stating that 2,025 pigs had been stolen from John Brown's farm.

The editor questioned the figure, but the reporter insisted that it was correct and that he had the farmer's word for it.

Still unconvinced, the editor decided to call Brown direct and verify the figure.

"Yeth?" lisped Brown as he picked up the phone.

The editor changed the story to read that "two sows and 25 pigs" had been stolen.

The year ahead will bring Oregon farmers a new mixture of bitter and sweet, but the blend should not be too bad, according to a forecast from Marion D. Thomas, extension agricultural economist at Oregon State College.

Farm income in the state has gained a little in each of the past three years, and has a fairly good chance of moving up some more in the year ahead, Thomas said. These past gains show the strength of agriculture, even during times when lumbering and other phases of the state's economy were either losing ground or barely holding their own, he pointed out.

There is more caution and concern in the minds of businessmen, bankers, labor leaders, public officials, and others in Oregon and throughout the nation than at any time since 1954, Thomas reports.

"Recent developments have shaken everyone's confidence," he explains, "and as a nation we are seeking the happy medium between too much and too little confidence, the political and military strength to protect what we cherish, and the economic stability that lies between too much and too little credit and debt, between inflation and deflation."

"However, individually, as groups, and through the government steps are being taken to store up our confidence," Thomas thinks. "And, barring a more serious letdown in the economy than now seems likely, and assuming no all-out war in 1958 and no major changes in government farm programs, it seems likely that farmers will in general receive and pay about the same average prices as in 1957," he says.

Thomas is quick to point out, however, that there will be important changes by commodities and types of farm in the state. For one thing, he said, Oregon is almost certain to see a larger production and lower prices for its number one cash-producing farm crop—wheat. The state's fall plantings of wheat were up 13 per cent over a year earlier. And, with almost ideal weather getting the new crop off to a good start, odds are that wheat will be piling up again in the coming season unless exports pick up soon.

The past year was also a big one for feed grains, and feed grain stocks, already large in Oregon and the nation, will probably be still larger at the close of the present feeding season. This means that sooner or later farmers will either have to reduce the output of feed grains, or feed more animals, Thomas reports.

Oregon's hay crop wasn't quite as large as expected, totalling a shade under the previous year. Yet the total supply on hand, including a large carryover, is about 13 per cent larger than the past season. Even so, Thomas says, prices next summer may be up some for hay, if mouse damage to meadows and hay fields is as severe as now feared.

Cattle prices in the state held high at the end of the year, but it is doubtful if they will stay at that level through 1958, Thomas said.

Bunchings of fed cattle marketings in April and May, along with a fairly heavy hog slaughter, could break spring markets rather badly, he believes. The cattle market during the last half of the year will depend heavily on how employment and incomes are going, as well as the supply of meats on hand.

Hog production over the nation is building up again, although apparently not as fast as three years ago, Thomas said. But since all three Pacific Coast states use more pork than they produce, and have lots of barley at prices fairly competitive with corn in the Midwest, the year ahead will probably be neither the best nor the worst for Oregon hog raisers.

As usual, lamb prices will be influenced by what happens to beef, Thomas notes, which means prices should be favorable most of the time. Since wool supports will stay the same as in 1957, this commodity should remain fairly stable.

Poultrymen should have a better year, but dairy returns probably will be about the same as in 1957. Fruits and vegetables should recover part of the ground lost during the past year, but aren't likely to climb all the way back where they were before the price break, Thomas believes. Potatoes now in storage should also enjoy steady-to-rising prices if marketings proceed on an orderly basis.

Farm incomes on most types of commercial family-operated farms in the nation were larger in 1956 than the year before, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reports.

This is brought out in a study, "Farm Costs and Returns, 1956, with Comparisons" (AIB No. 178), just published by the department. The study, made each year by economists of USDA's Agricultural Research Service, is focused on 28 types of commercial family-operated farms in important farming areas of the U.S.

Net income — income left after deducting charges, outlays, and losses — on the family-operated farms in the study was larger in 1956 than in 1955. However, 10 of the types had lower net incomes in 1956. Incomes by types of farm ranged from about $13,900 on wheat-pea farms in the Washington-Idaho area, to a loss of about $1,240 on drought-ridden cattle ranches of the Southwest.

The report points out that in 1956 net income per farm was only 34 per cent of gross income, compared with 50 per cent during the 1942-46 period. USDA economists give three reasons for this: (1) the declining importance of farm family labor in farm production, (2) increased mechanization on farms, and (3) the increase since 1952 in production costs relative to prices received by farmers for their products. As a result, the study says, farmers' purchasing power has declined more than a third since 1946.

The report shows that farming is fast becoming an occupation requiring substantial capital investments. For example, estimated total capital on these farms ranged from a little less than $10,000 on peanut-cotton farms in the Southern Coastal Plains to more than $177,000 on sheep ranches in the Southwest.

Gross income on the 28 types of farms studied averaged more in 1956 than the year before. Chief reasons for this additional income are the increase in farm size and the amount of capital used per farm and the increased productivity.

REELECTED TO SUCCEED THEMSELVES at a recent meeting of the Klamath Basin Grade A Milk Producers Association are the three dairymen shown above. From left to right they are Lawrence Geraghty, president; Wilbur Reiling, vice president and Ray Hobson, secretary-treasurer. The all day meeting was held at the fairgrounds Tuesday with lunch being furnished by the Poe Valley Home Economics Club.

Farming Hours Seen Shorter

The farm workday is slowly but surely becoming shorter.

Declines in working hours per day in nearly all states are reported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Farmers averaged 10.7 hours work per day around June 1 of last year. At the same time in 1956 the average was 10.9 hours per day, and in 1955 it was 11.2.

Much of the decrease in the farm workday comes about as a result of reductions in chore labor.

USDA studies show that gains in labor efficiency are possible through such things as improved arrangement of buildings, use of labor-saving equipment, and adaptation of chore routines. In one series of tests annual dairy chore labor was reduced from 225 hours labor per cow to less than 70 hours through such practices.

Another study shows that the chores may be cut by 80 per cent. Again, time-saving practices decreased the amount of labor needed to tend the flock. For example, an automatic waterer providing continuous flow might lower the time required to water poultry by hand from 42 hours annually to three hours.

Through newer and better methods and machinery the farmer will be able to enjoy more leisure time while still getting his work done.

A copy of "Farm Costs and Returns, 1956, With Comparisons" (AIB No. 176) may be obtained from the Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, 25, D.C.

HOME REPAIR DO's And DON'T's

ROLLER PAINTING

DO . . . use the correct roller cover and the proper paint for the surface to be covered, getting the information from your dealer or from the Paint Roller-Paint Selector which many stores now carry.

DO . . . be sure the surface is clean and free from oil, dust and foreign matter.

DO . . . be certain that the roller is not overloaded, removing excess paint each time by rolling

over the dry surface of the tray.

DO . . . roll back and forth easily on the surface in all directions, letting the roller do the work and not pressing down.

DON'T . . . when doing walls, start rolling with a downward stroke; always roll upward with a light, even stroke on the first "pass" with the roller.

DON'T . . . roll too fast, a common cause of a spraying effect.

DON'T . . . spin the roller at the end of a stroke, stopping it completely before removing it from the wall.

DON'T . . . resume painting in freshly-painted portion, remembering always to start on a dry portion and roll into the painted area.