

Deciding Factors in Swine Judging.

When judging swine in this country one must ever bear in mind the great essential, namely, that the industry and the future thereof depend upon the production of the bacon hog. It is not a question of breeds. Type is the all-important and cardinal factor in the development of the swine industry in Canada. We must produce the Wiltshire side in order to maintain our trade connections and an outlet for our product. Type is the first consideration, and the animal possessing this qualification must give evidence of sufficient constitution, vigor and prepotency to insure its transmission to the offspring. Type then, and ability to transmit it, are the most important requirements of breeding stock. The judge, in making his decisions, should keep these points steadfast in his mind.

As a general thing there are no hidden defects about swine. Any undesirable feature of the hog's conformation, type or quality is usually visible to the naked eye and can be detected by observation. Very little handling is necessary. A weak back in a sheep can be remedied, so to speak, with the shears; tricks in showing the horse are legion; depressions or holes in the flesh of a fattened cattle beast can be inflated, while a slack udder can be distended with milk so as to show the cow off to advantage. Provided the swine are entered in their proper classes according to age, the judge is able to see them as they are, and with an experienced eye can make the awards expeditiously.

Bearing in mind the fact that type and conformation must be backed up by constitution, vigor and all those characteristics which insure a reasonable length of life as well as prolificacy, we can study the hog in detail and come to some understanding as to the relative importance of each point and its relation to the ideal animal in its entirety. The illustrations on the opposite page will help to make the text of this article clear to all.

A judge can work more speedily if he adopts some system. There are three vantage points from which the animal must be viewed, namely, front, broadside and rear. As the hog is observed from these three different positions none of the important parts need escape the sight and consideration. The head of the bacon hog must be wide between the ears and eyes, and the face should not be too long, but this varies with the different breeds. For instance, the length between the eyes and nose of a Tamworth would not be tolerated in a Berkshire, and vice versa, so it is necessary to have an understanding of breed as well as bacon type, but the requirements of the former should not be allowed in any way to interfere with the ideals demanded by the market. The jaw should be trim. A fat, flabby jaw is altogether out of place on a bacon hog. The neck, while it must be in proper proportion to the rest of the body, need not be too long; it should be fairly short, neat, and blend evenly with the head and shoulder. The two most common defects of the shoulder are thickness, and a looseness or openness on top. This part of the animal must be taken into consideration along with the side and ham or quarters. Assume that a straight-edge is placed against the side of the pig, resting on the shoulder in front and the quarter behind; then, if all parts of the side between the shoulder and ham come out evenly to the straight-edge the conformation is ideal in this respect. The eye is always depended on for making such observations. Thickness of shoulder is a relative term. An aged pig will be much thicker through the shoulder than a young one, but if the point of the shoulder does not stand out much farther than the side at the heart and rear flank, the thickness cannot be considered as a serious defect. In this case it is the consequence of age and development; the proportions must be considered always. A neat shoulder, smooth and well rounded on the top answers the requirement of bacon type. An open shoulder on top is undesirable.

From a side view several important parts must be examined. In the first place the length and depth of the side must be taken into consideration. This part of the porcine anatomy furnishes the "Wiltshire" side upon which the whole industry is based. The side should be long and deep without evidence of carrying too large a percentage of fat. The back should be slightly arched as a guarantee of sufficient strength to undergo a life-time of service in the breeding pens. The pasterns, too, must be straight so the animal stands up well on the toes and has a sprightly, steady walk. A broken-down pastern is indicative of old age, or an unpardonable weakness. Another very important consideration is the constitution or chest development. The breeding hog must show no depression back of the shoulder. The chest should be deep and thick as evidence of vigor, strong constitution, and ability to feed well and turn the rations to good account. A full heart girth leaves no depression behind the shoulder at the back, or farther down the side. Any defect in this region should be viewed with apprehension and the animal weak in this respect penalized in the judging ring. The arched back, the upright pastern, and the strong constitution are qualifications that signify robustness, good feeding qualities, and a life-time of useful as well as profitable service.

The most valuable part of the bacon hog is from the shoulder backward. The side itself is the indicator of type, provided the other parts conform with it, but the ham or quarter ranks next in value and importance. A good length from the shoulder backward is imperative, for in this region lie the sought-for cuts.

While viewing the animal from the side, note the arch of back, previously mentioned, and observe the slope to the tail-head. There should be a gradual slope from the loin down to the tail-head. A flat rump is

objectionable, yet the slope should not be too great. This can be decided with the eye, for there must be a harmonious blending of the parts and uniformity throughout.

The ham which conforms to bacon type is neat, well let down and tapering to the hock. The outside of the ham should be in a straight line with the side and shoulder, making the alignment true along the side. While thick, "beefy" hams are undesirable, the animal should not be "cut up" too far between the quarters. A review of all the requirements herein set forth settles the matter in respect to lines. From a front or rear view the sides will be straight. While a broadside view should reveal a somewhat straight underline, especially in young stock, the back or top line will be arched. The width of the back itself will be governed by the size of the hog. A fair width is necessary in a fully-developed animal, but excessive thickness will tend to carry the pig into the lard or fat-hog class. In every case the width should be even and uniform over the shoulder, back, loin and rump.

The character of the bone and hair are indicators of quality in the porcine family. Taking age into consideration, silkiness of hair and fine, yet sufficient bone, are indicative of the sought-after quality in bacon hogs. Curly hair or swirls usually are not found in conjunction with the best quality. The skin, too, is often noted in this regard, but so much depends on the treatment given it that too much stress should not be laid on that point. Quality in the hog is revealed in the conformation and general make-up of the animal; it is the first thing to impress itself upon the mind of an expert judge, yet it is the most difficult thing to describe. Quality, or the lack of same, stands out all over the hog, but if asked to point it out even the best judges would have a task. As in all other classes of live stock, the male must possess masculinity, and the female, femininity; these characteristics along with the vigor, constitution and general strength of the animal insure the transmission to the progeny of the qualifications required in the bacon hog.

When judging butcher classes, some allowance can be made for defects that will not injure the hog soon going to the block. Type, size, finish and quality are the deciding factors. In breeding classes we must have all these things along with constitution and strength of body, as a guarantee of prepotency and usefulness.

Starting in Swine.

Some beginners in all phases of the live stock industry think they should put off the initial step until they can make it a long one and thus make a bigger showing. This is particularly true in respect to pure-breds. Every beginner finds he has something to learn and the wisdom will be acquired with less expense when the first step is a cautious one. Prof. G. E. Day's advice to beginners in the swine industry is sound and based on the experiences of many breeders. It reads as follows: "One of the most common mistakes for a beginner to make is to be too ambitious, and to make his start on too large a scale. As a result, he is liable to meet with some rather serious losses and to become discouraged. Perhaps the safest way to start is to buy one or two young sows safely in pig to a good boar. It costs more money to start this way than to buy newly-weaned pigs, but this disadvantage is more than compensated by the fact that a person is able to make a much more intelligent selection by buying a more fully developed animal than he could make if he bought his sow very young. In addition to this advantage, he has a shorter time to wait for returns. He is also saved the necessity of immediately buying a boar, if there is not a good one in the near neighborhood, and need not tie up capital in a boar until he has had some money returns from his venture, provided, of course, that he cares to sell some of his young pigs at an early age."

Hogs Getting Scarcer.

The effect of the heavy liquidation of all kinds of swine and breeding stock in particular, which took place last fall is beginning to be felt seriously throughout this country, particularly in those parts of Ontario where grain crops were a failure last year. A shortage of feed led at once to a thinning of the herds, and swine were unloaded quickly because their ration must consist chiefly of grain, while hay and roughage would maintain cattle in some condition if not in the best. If a consistent effort had been made to retain the sows for breeding purposes, litters would now be maturing and ready to be finished for market. Those in touch with the trade say the hogs are not in the country to be had, and receipts at the leading stock yards seem to substantiate this statement. For the week ending July 26 there were 4,274 hogs on the Union Stock Yards market, Toronto. For the week ending August 2 there were 3,700, but for the corresponding week in 1916 there were 8,954. From January 1, 1917 to August 9, something over 30,000 fewer hogs were marketed at Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg than during the corresponding period of 1916.

It is natural to expect that hog runs would not be heavy until after some threshing had been done, but when meat of all kinds is so urgently needed and prices are high to the producer, and higher to the consumer it seems too bad that a greater effort was not made last fall to conserve the breeding stock at any rate. Mill-feeds and grains soared high in price, yet the profits from hog feeding through the past winter and summer months would compare favorably with any period on record. It was only a matter of doing bigger business

than usual. Hogs at \$18 to \$18.25, fed and watered, would warrant the purchase of feed at any price it has yet reached, and they have sold for one dollar above, that figure.

Another complaint frequently heard is that farmers do not grow enough pasture crops for the hogs, which would increase the number that could be carried as well as the thrift of the herd. Hog raising is as profitable as any kind of live-stock farming and will remunerate anyone for the care and energy expended on it. It still seems that hogs are a safe thing to produce, inasmuch as the end of the war is not in sight and meats will have such an extensive outlet for some time to come.

Should Hogs Wallow?

There seems to be considerable difference of opinion amongst swine breeders as to whether hogs should be allowed to frequent a mud wallow. Many are opposed to it on the grounds that contagion is spread in this way, and the conditions in such a case would be worse, of course, if the wallow be fed by a running stream of water. Under such circumstances disease could be carried either to a herd or from it to another. The author of "Swine in America" publishes a letter in regard to this subject from N. H. Gentry, one of the most successful breeders in the United States. Mr. Gentry writes as follows: "Creating a breed of hogs that do not like to wallow is going outside of nature. People take mud baths for rheumatism. You may have a clean brook, but the hogs won't like it. I built boxes for them to bathe in, and five minutes after the hogs got out they would be dry. Earth is a good disinfectant. I do not believe in a filthy place, but I never saw a hog that did not like a mudhole, and when he gets in it he does not want water but wants to wallow in the mud. It cleans the scurf from his skin. If before taking him to an exhibition you let a hog wallow in mud, you secure a skin finish you cannot obtain in any other way. Nothing is more soothing than mud. I tried to believe for years that it was not for the hog's good, but I tell you that depriving a hog of this mud bath is against nature. Nature is a pretty risky thing either to play or fight with. I do not believe all stiff hogs have rheumatism. I had an imported sow that had never eaten corn in her life and she foundered and to her death was stiff; as plain a case of foundering as I ever saw. I do not believe in fighting with nature. What is better than to have the hogs go to a shady place and wallow, without too much water? I believe in mud baths, but I keep my hogs away from manure heaps, and always have shade over the wallow."

Glean the Fields With Hogs.

After every harvest there is more or less waste left on the fields that might well be taken up by swine and converted into meat. Heads and kernels of grain, which in some cases amount to no inconsiderable quantity, are scattered throughout the stubble. This constitutes an absolute loss. A bunch of shotes, housed in a portable cabin, would glean the field of all grain and consume much of the grass and weeds that grow about the fences and corners. Unless the field is seeded it would not be necessary in every case to ring them in order to prevent the land being too much disturbed. Where the grain was lodged this idea of gleaning the field applies with additional force, inasmuch as the loss is usually greater. During the latter part of September and up to the middle of October the corn will be harvested, after which there will be loose cobs lying about the stubble no matter how careful the men may be in picking up the bits. Last of all the roots will be lifted and the hogs will complete the job. In carrying out this system of rotating the shotes from field to field, an immense saving will be made. Cattle, of course, would perform the same function in the corn field but they would not be nearly so efficient as the swine in gleaning the grain stubble. The one important drawback to this system is the matter of fencing. However, after the grain harvest there are only the corn and root fields to protect from serious damage. If there is feed in the field, fair sized shotes will not give a great deal of trouble, provided holes in the fences are plugged and the wire fences are tight at the ground. A stake here and there will keep a wire fence down which ordinarily the hog would get his nose under and lift. Gleaning should be practiced more than it is.

Roots and plenty of exercise go a long way in winter towards maintaining healthy herds of swine. Summer conditions should be duplicated so far as possible.

Sows which have raised large litters frequently give birth to small ones if bred too soon after farrowing or after the pigs are weaned. The dam should be allowed a brief rest, when possible, in order to regain vitality lost through her arduous duties.

When selecting a young sow for breeding purposes, choose from a large litter. The young ones in a small litter might present a better appearance while still on the dam, owing to a less severe strain on the mother, but sows from large litters are more likely to be prolific.

When purchasing a boar to be the future herd-header, it is wise to visit some breeder and inspect the quality of his entire herd. One can never tell just how a very young pig will develop so it would be well to pay a little more money for an older pig which gives assurance of proper conformation, type and quality.