

The Cost of Pork Production.

The unprecedented price of pork for the past several months naturally causes the consumer to question whether or not the rise is legitimately due to increased cost of production or to manipulation by the much abused middleman. The producer himself is frequently uncertain as to the actual cost of production when the various factors influencing costs have been accounted for. Indeed the charges against young pigs at six weeks of age, where the maintenance of the dam is properly charged and where present feed prices apply, where no cheap by-product or refuse is available, and particularly where only one litter per year per sow is raised, are greater than many swine growers suppose.

The following figures are available from swine breeding operations at the Experimental Farm, Ottawa, and elsewhere on the Experimental Farm System and may throw some light on the question. To arrive at the cost of young pigs the feeding costs of not only the dam but also the grandam are necessary. In other words the full maintenance cost of the young sow together with her milking period charges, should be figured to arrive at the cost of the first litter. For succeeding litters a pro rata charge for each individual of the litter, should be made of feeding and breeding charges incurred while the sow was carrying and later suckling the litters up to weaning time.

Feed cost to raise a gilt to first farrowing.....	\$28.37
Breeding charges, cost to feed while suckling litter.....	10.00
Total cost of first litter.....	\$38.37
Cost per pig at weaning (7 in a litter).....	\$ 5.48

If the cost were figured on the market value of the young sow the cost of the litter per pig would be considerably higher—\$8.24.

If sold after raising one litter the sow might be expected to bring about \$35.00 or to nearly pay the total cost of her first venture.

If retained as a brood sow, bred shortly after weaning, and subsequently raising a second litter of seven pigs, the cost per pig would be in the vicinity of \$2.82.

The average cost per pig may be safely figured at \$3.00. Seven raised pigs per sow is a high average, numerous individual cases to the contrary.

A Comparison of Costs Then and Now.

Several years ago at the Ontario Agricultural College it was estimated that where all incidental feeding, maintenance and breeding charges were considered, young pigs could be raised to six weeks at a cost of \$1.27 each with an average litter of six and one half pigs. Meal was charged at the rate of \$20 per ton; skim-milk, \$3.00 per ton; and roots, \$2.00. Present day prices would be \$50.00; \$4.00 and \$3.00, respectively, at the lowest estimate and would explain the fact that the foregoing figures are so much higher than the Guelph findings which were practically similar to those shown at the Central Experimental Farm at that time.

The cost to produce pork from these young pigs against which feeding charges at the average rate of \$3.00 each must be levied at six weeks of age, will vary widely with the methods of feeding. Figures from the Experimental Farms records would indicate that four pounds of meal, or the equivalent in other forms of feed, per pound gain would be a safe basis. In the case of the bacon hog this would amount at present feed prices to \$13.00 to \$15.00 per pig. Adding to this the \$3.00 charge up to weaning time the total feeding charge would be from \$16.00 to \$18.00. Where skim-milk and pasture were both available to replace meal, \$15.00 might be taken as a fair feeding charge.

While the average overhead charge is relatively small in the case of the farmer who keeps but a few pigs, it is capable of wide variation depending entirely upon the intelligent understanding of the owner concerning the principles of swine husbandry. A range of from 20% to 60% of the feeding charges might be allowed. In most cases the lower figure might fairly be applied.

The foregoing estimates include only feeding and breeding charges and are exclusive of labor, depreciation, and

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overhead charges generally. The element of risk, much in evidence in swine raising is also omitted.

Under proper management there is a fair profit in hogs. To the consumer and the prospective swine grower the foregoing figures, however, would indicate certainly that such profits are not excessive.

A Scotchman was once at a race meeting in the Old Country in the company of a friend. Before the races the friend asked Sandy if he would like to try his luck.

After a great deal of explanation and persuasion, Sandy backed his fancy for a very small amount, being in a very down-hearted mood over the transaction.

Sandy's horse won at ten to one, and the friend hurried off to collect his winnings.

When he received his money, he turned to the friend and exclaimed: "Lord mon, how long has this been going on?"

Questions and Answers.

Miscellaneous.

Oyster Shell for Hens.

1. Do you consider it necessary to give hens oyster shell during the summer months to keep them laying, when they get access to everything outdoors?

H. H. G.

Ans.—1. It may not be absolutely necessary where hens have free range. In fact it is not, but it costs very little to keep a supply in a hopper where the hens have access to it at all times. If they do not require it they will not take it; if they do need a little it is there for them.

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