Co-operative Livestock Shipping

Has Many Advantages---Simple Form of Organization---Suggestions to Shippers---By J. P. Sackville

A LIVESTOCK shipping association is one of the simplest of co-operative business organizations. It has the advantage of requiring no capital or equipment, as a matter of fact, an organization is unnecessary, as a group of farmers may get together on the matter and simply agree to ship their livestock under the direction of one of their number. There is this to be said, however, that an organization is an advantage inasmuch that it is a splendid basis for co-operative activities, and thus by making of their association a useful institution to their district, the co-operative spirit is developed.

Information to hand would indicate that farmers are very anxious to give the system a trial and would appreciate any information available on the matter. This is particularly true this year, and at this particular time, for, due to the feed shortage we find that a larger number of cattle than usual are being marketed. Naturally, this has a tendency to lower prices somewhat, but it is believed that in certain parts of the country drovers are taking advantage of the situation to unduly restrict prices at country points. A concrete case was brought to my attention a few days ago, when a farmer had some reasonably good quality heifers that he was forced to sell. The local buyer would bid him only four cents a pound, while the same week the same quality cattle were being sold on the St. Boniface market at eight cents a pound.

Branding at the Stockyards. Cattle shipped out for feeding are frequently branded at the yards. Cost $3.00 per Car.

Advantages of Co-operation

A livestock shipping association has many advantages. It assures each farmer that he will get exactly what his stock will bring on the central market, less the cost of getting it there and disposing of it. In other words, it gives the small shipper the same opportunity as the large shipper, and will, if properly handled, save considerable money for its members. The expense of a buyer in going about picking up stock is saved. In fact, in many localities there are several buyers and the expense simply adds to the cost of marketing. There is the buyer's expense in gambling on the price of stock as he advances money on his purchases; in co-operative livestock shipping it simply means that the farmers are willing to take this risk.

Another feature of the livestock shipping is important, and that is that it encourages the production of good stock, because each shipper gets exactly what his stock will sell for on the market. If he has good stock he gets a good price; if poor stock he gets a poor price. This is not always the case with the local buyer plan. From records available, there is plenty of evidence to prove that it has meant a saving of many dollars to farmers throughout Western Canada. The following quotation taken from the Saskatchewan report for co-operative organizations 1916-17 is interesting as indicating the estimated increase in revenue due to co-operative shipping.

During the past year the co-operative livestock marketing work has made steady and satisfactory progress. The importance of this work may not be at first apparent, but a study of the following table giving particulars supplied by the managers of four associations in regard to their 1916 stock marketing work and the savings effected reveals the inherent possibilities of this system of livestock marketing.

Name	Number of Cars	Number of Shippers	Weight	Market's average price per pound	Amount Saved
Glenavy Co-operative Association, Ltd.	9	78	147640	1c	$1107.30
Richlea Co-operative Association, Ltd.	17	240	298094	1c	1862.56
Wolseley G.G. Assoc. Office, Ltd.	20	183	306400	1c	1962.50
Young G.G. Assoc. Office, Ltd.	14	—	240076	1½c	3724.55

It is only just to say, however, that in, spite of what many shipping associations have gained by marketing co-operatively, there may be cases when the owners might have realized more for the animals through the local buyer. Take the case of a glutted market or a slump in prices, which is almost sure to occur at times, then the shipper stands to lose. In the aggregate, however, and including a year's business, the gain is considerable.

When a few farmers in a locality are desirous of making a shipment of stock the first step necessary is for them to get together and appoint one of the number to act as shipping agent. Upon the selection of the shipping agent much of the success of the movement depends. The shipping guide, which may be procured from any commission firm, are so simple and clear that a man with no previous experience in shipping livestock will have no difficulty in interpreting them. The main qualification is, that the shipping agent should have the confidence of the men of the district in which he lives. Having this, he will get their support and encouragement and the success of the undertaking will be assured.

The work of the shipping agent consists of determining the shipping day, ordering the cars, marking and weighing the stock and when the distance exceeds 100 miles accompanying the shipment to the market, or provide some one to do so, and in a general way keep in touch with the stock raisers of the district. His remuneration for this work is a matter of local arrangement with the association under whose auspices he works, but the plan that seems to be working out satisfactory amongst the hundreds of associations that are now shipping is on the basis of 10 cents per cwt. commission together with all reasonable travelling expenses for the man who accompanies the car.

"Selects"—right weight and finish. Not necessary to shipping to mark these.

Marking the Stock

When the day for shipment has been decided the shipping agent, having previously arranged for a car, the stock is delivered to the local station, the shipping agent will weigh and mark each man's stock by clipping with a pair of scissors Roman numerals on the left flank or loin. Each shipper in a car is given a number in the order of delivery. For example, John Smith is the first man to reach the station with his stock, and all animals in that car belonging to John Smith would be marked "I." The next man to make delivery is James Jones, his animals being marked "II," and so on in order of delivery. The weigh tickets would read thus:—

John Smith	3 steers	weight 3400 lbs.	Marked I
James Jones	2 cows	weight 2710 lbs.	Marked II
"	1 calf	weight 300 lbs.	Marked II
H. Johnson	1 bull	weight 1820 lbs.	Marked III

Other shippers receiving marks IV., V., VI., VII., and so on. In handling hogs the "selects," that is, hogs weighing 150 to 200 lbs., do not need to be marked; this class of hogs bringing the top price they are all sold in one lot and settlement is made on home weight. To illustrate this: Supposing according to home weigh tickets there were 15,000 lbs. of select hogs in a shipment, when they were weighed at the stock yards they only weighed 14,850 lbs., showing a shrinkage of 150 lbs. over home weight. This shrinkage would be pro-rated, each man bearing his proportion of this shrinkage according to what amount of select weight he had in that particular car. Where Frank Brown had shipped 8 pigs weighing 2,000 lbs. in this shipment his proportion of the 150 lbs. loss would be 20 lbs., which would be 2½ lbs. for each pig. Hogs, other than selects, such as heavy sows, stags or boars, must be marked. This may be done by using green paint with a 50 per cent. mixture of varnish in order that the marks will dry quickly. Such marks as (x) or (o) on the shoulder, back or ham is a clear identification mark. The weigh tickets in case of hogs would read, thus:—

Geo. Wade	5 select hogs	weight 1225 lbs.	no mark
	1 heavy sow	weight 450 lbs.	green X on right shoulder
Fred Wade	7 select hogs	weight 1050 lbs.	no mark
	1 boar	weight 530 lbs.	green O on ham

Sheep are marked in a similar way.

The car is billed through to the stock yards in the name of the shipping agent, in care of the commission firm to which the stock is consigned. It is advisable to inform the commission man, by wire or letter, stating number of car, contents and probable time of arrival. In this way they have an idea of the amount of stock coming along, which facilitates handling the stock at the yards. If it is deemed wise to insure the shipment this can be arranged for by taking out a policy to cover a year's business, the amount of the premiums being based on the business being handled that year, or in other words, if only one shipment is made in one year, the insurance premiums would be to the amount of that shipment; if $300,000 worth of stock was shipped in the year the amount would be based on $300,000. One at least of the commission firms carry a blanket policy with one of the insurance companies and all stock shipped to them become automatically insured. Where animals are insured all losses are paid in full just the same had the animals been sold in the usual way.

Part of a Co-operative Car. The Roman numerals on hind quarters shows the method of marking co-operative shipments.

A Carload of Good Feeders. Note uniformity and smoothness; this type of cattle respond well to feed.