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Too Many Inferior Hogs Marketed



IN a letter which we received a few days ago from a leading pork-packing firm outside of Toronto, appears the following statement: "Notwithstanding all that has been

written and all the encouragement that has been given, we find a great many hogs coming in that are utterly unsuitable for either Canadian or English trade."

From this it would appear that our farmers have not all reached perfection in the quality of hogs required to meet the needs of the bacon trade. There has, undoubtedly, been a great improvement during the past year or two, due largely to the educational methods as advocated through the Farmers' Institutes, the winter fair, the distribution of literature on the subject, and last, but not least, through the agricultural press, but more aggressive work is evidently needed. A great many farmers are still breeding and feeding hogs along the old lines, resulting in a lot of animals being marketed which, as the above extract states, are suited neither for the Canadian or the English trade.

There cannot be many farmers, in this province, at least, who are not more or less familiar with the needs of this trade and of the type of animal required for the export market. Then why has there not been even greater improvement along the lines we have indicated? We think one answer to this question is to be found in the manner in which hogs are usually purchased from the farmer. As far as we can learn, there are comparatively few drovers in the country who make any distinction whatever between good and bad quality when making their purchases. The farmer who has a batch of thick, fat hogs, totally unsuited for the English trade, will get as much per head for them from the drover as his neighbor who is endeavoring to raise the right quality. Not long ago, in conversation with a farmer in the western part of this province, who raises a large number of hogs, he stated that the drovers in his section offered no encouragement whatever to raise the right type, paying as much for one kind as the other. So long, then, as this condition of affairs exists, all this educational propaganda will be without avail.

Unless the average farmer can see a little more money in raising the bacon hog, as compared with the other kind, he is not likely to give much attention to producing the former; and who could blame him. Perhaps the new Live Stock Dealers' Association, recently formed in this city, may be able to remedy matters, and bring about better methods of buying in the country.

Another factor that is working against the production of the best type of bacon hog at the present time is the great scarcity of hogs of any kind in the country. The manufacturing of bacon in Canada has grown so rapidly of late that some of our packing houses can hardly get sufficient supplies to keep their establishments running, and, consequently, are taking both good and bad quality at prices that should be very remunerative for the producer. Such a condition of affairs is all right from the farmers' standpoint, so long as it lasts. But in building up the export bacon trade or any other trade of a like nature, we must look to the future. It is quality that counts in the long run, and we cannot hope to build up and increase this important trade with any degree of permanency unless some attention is given to supplying the kind of hogs which the market demands. We have strong competitors in the field, such as Denmark and Ireland, which are bending their energies in the direction of quality, and unless we do the same this most promising of our Canadian export trades is sure to come to grief. This whole question, then, is of the greatest importance to the packer and farmer alike. If we can supply the English market with a first-class quality when things are brisk, we will stand a much better chance in that market when trade is dull and prices are low. It is to be hoped, therefore, that this improvement in quality, so noticeable during the past year or two, will continue till every hog marketed in Canada will be suitable for making the finest quality of bacon.

It is encouraging to note the rapidity with which our bacon trade has grown during the past year. The imports of Canadian bacon into the United Kingdom for the year ending December, 1900, amounted to \$5,377,225, as against \$3,809,305 for the year previous, an increase of \$1,567,920. The imports of Canadian hams for the same time amounted to \$2,234,-