

RANCHING INDUSTRY

One of Alberta's oldest established industries--ranching--is presently in the midst of one of its more prosperous periods according to the Alberta Government publication "Within Our Borders". Prices of cattle on current markets compare favorably with the cost of production. Stockmen look to the future with anticipation of even better times.

Alberta's early settlers quickly realized that the vast expanse of land in the southern portion of the province was ideally suited to raising cattle. It is believed that commercial cattle first made their appearance on the Alberta scene about 1877 when John Miller of Montana drove a small herd into the present area south of Calgary. In the ensuing years the industry flourished. Estimates indicate that more than two million head are being raised in the province at the present time.

While the ranching industry is generally accepted as being concentrated in the southern half of Alberta, estimated cattle population figures show that the larger percentage is raised in the northern half, if Red Deer is used as mid-way point. In June 1956, there were approximately 2,186,000 cattle on Alberta farms and ranches. An estimated 392,000 are milch cows and heifers. About 993,000 cattle are located in the southern ranching area. In 1956 the number of cattle in Alberta reached an all time peak for the fourth consecutive year. Prior to 1953, peak numbers were reached in 1945 with 1,860,000 head and 1921 with 1,854,000 head.

Figures based on the 1951 census show that 640 farms or ranches carried more than 178 head of cattle each. 15,503 of a total of 84,315 farms had between three and seven head. There were 2,528 farms carrying between 48 and 62 head, and 1,569 raising between 78 and 122 head. Agriculture officials assume proportions remain constant to today.

Alberta cattle make up one-fifth of Canada's cattle population of just over 10,000,000 head.

Net marketing of cattle for the first five months of this year were 226,000 head compared

with 210,700 in the same period last year. Calf sales are calculated at approximately 35,800 and 32,600 for the first five months of 1956 and 1955, respectively. These figures do not include kills on farms.

The 1955 gross value of cattle marketings to Alberta stock raisers at public stockyards, shipped direct to packers and direct for export was \$78,691,930 compared with \$74,245,151 in 1954 and \$67,020,379 in 1953. Calf marketings totalled \$7,185,817 in 1955 compared with \$6,133,395 and \$6,322,526 in the preceding two years respectively.

Average price paid in Alberta stockyards per hundredweight last year was: (1954 prices in brackets) Calgary, \$15.30 (\$15.09); Edmonton, \$14.10 (\$13.56), and Lethbridge, \$15.25 (\$15.00). Calf prices were: Calgary, \$16.35 (\$15.30); Edmonton, \$15.75 (\$15.04), and Lethbridge, \$15.30 (\$13.92).

The number of cattle slaughtered was 596,000. Calves slaughtered were 75,604 compared with 71,924 in 1954 and 57,196 in 1953. September was the peak month for cattle, 29,740; and November for calves, 10,279.

A total of 584,745 cattle were marketed last year. Public stockyards took up 411,594 head; packing plants, 159,294 head; 4,682 were shipped directly to export, and 9,175 were exported directly to country points in other provinces. Outward calf marketings totalled 133,821 head distributed as follows: public stock yards, 66,927; direct on export, 59; packing plants, 57,963, and country points in other provinces, 8,872.

Of the cattle delivered to stockyards and packing plants 83.48 per cent are transported by truck.

Manitobans were the biggest inter-provincial buyers of Alberta cattle last year with 15,653 head. Other provinces included British Columbia, 10,866; Quebec, 8,297; Ontario, 7,562, and Saskatchewan, 1,060. Calf sales to other provinces were: Ontario, 1,886; Manitoba, 976; Quebec, 428; Saskatchewan, 262, and British Columbia, 70.

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TENTH ANNIVERSARY: The Annual Report of the Department of National Health and Welfare points out that the year ended March 31, 1956 saw the tenth anniversary of the payment of Family Allowances in Canada. These allowances were first paid in the month of July, 1945. Since that date, more than \$3,000,000,000 have been paid in Family Allowances.

There have been very definite indications of the effect the payment of Family Allowances has had on the health and welfare of Canada's children, the Report states.

Each year, the number of families receiving allowances grows, and thus expenditures increase. Similar growth is evident in the Old

Age Security programme, which was inaugurated in January 1952. The past year has been primarily one of such expansion, with no major changes in either programme, but with continuing development of policies and procedures. The increase in the number of Family Allowances accounts maintained at March 31, 1956, over that at March 31, 1955, was 68,322, the number growing from 2,208,235 to 2,276,567. In the case of Old Age Security, 779,569 pensioners were receiving payment at the end of 1955-56, as against 752,438 at the end of the previous fiscal year, an increase of 27,131. In neither case was the increase quite so great as in 1954-55 compared with 1953-54.