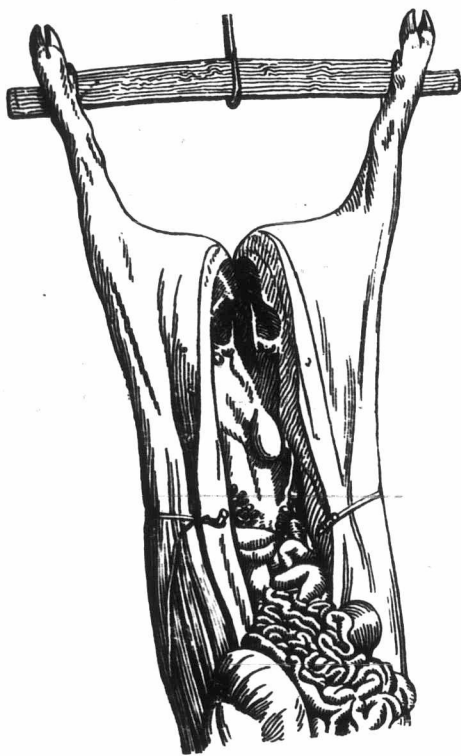


The Spaying of Sow Pigs.

OF THE HALL, R. C. V. A., HAMILTON, ONT.

There is no doubt that in the near future farmers and hog raisers must pay more attention to this important subject. The spaying of young sows is a necessity, and why the subject has been so much neglected in Canada is not quite apparent, but the fact remains that the operation of spaying sows is comparatively unknown amongst the generality of pig keepers. It may also be observed that the practice is not so generally followed in the remote parts of the agricultural districts of England as it was in former times. We account for it in a measure due to the class of men known as spayers and castrators, who perform this operation, have in a measure died out, giving place to the veterinary surgeons, who now practice castration in horses, and do not care to undertake so unthankful, unclean, and poorly paid operation as spaying pigs; and indeed we do not blame them, as it is a very delicate operation, and can be taught to any intelligent farmer in about ten minutes. The necessity arises, and it ought to be done, and must be done more extensively than it is at the present time. The next question arises, *What is pay, and why?* The question is thrust upon us by attending the markets and observing the actions of the pork packers. They invariably look for the mark or scar left by the operation, and are willing in every case to give a cent a pound more for spayed than for open sows. It is the general rule in the western counties of England, and almost universally practiced in Ireland; in other districts it is not so frequently done. But recently the larger bacon curers of Limerick have refused to take open sows unless at a reduced price. They maintain that the flesh of unspayed sows will not cure or take the salt as well as those spayed, and the evidence of those who have experience in raising spayed sows, say that they cost less to feed, make a much better animal, superior in quality, less disposed to fret, and are never chased or worried by the male. They also record their experience by observing that it requires greater time to bring open, unspayed sows to maturity, that they require a larger amount of feed to fatten, and that during their period, oestrus or season, the flesh seems to melt off their sides, and during the ensuing twenty-eight days it requires double the amount of food to make up for the lost time. Mr. Fearman, the well-known pork packer of Hamilton, Ont., says that "Whenever I come across a defective side of bacon that has resisted the salt in curing, I find that it is the product of an unspayed Canadian sow." He recommends the Yorkshire as being the best for packing. It is a good, long, deep-sided pig with plenty hair of a reddish hue, and large in bone. And he further says: "If a pig shows the two latter points a breeder means a good proportion of lean meat." This coming from such an authority ought to be deeply impressed on the minds of the Canadian farmer. The average consumer, more especially in cities, requires and will have as much lean meat as fat, and it does seem to point to the condition of tending a class of hog that lays on as much lean as possible. The present class of animal that is offered seems to me to be of a grade of Yorkshire Whites, and are most favored by bacon curers. As a rule they prefer them about nine months old, weighing (alive) 160 to 200 pounds for Canadian trade; for export should not exceed when dressed 140 pounds; should be ready for market during the earliest months in summer, June, July, August and September, for preference. The quality wanted is lean pork from dairy fed sows, to meet the requirements of the English market and export. They should be sold alive to the packers, where the system of killing, dressing, cooling and curing can be done in a quick, uniform manner. It will be found that it will pay the farmer better to sell his swine as fat than to market them dressed; and it is not profitable to feed swine after they exceed 200 pounds alive. The public taste has turned

against fat meats of all kinds, and the farmer must produce what the consumer requires, so that with a little extra care in housing, the winter raising of young pigs to be sold off in June, July and August should become a very valuable adjunct to winter dairying. Mr. Fearman writes that he finds great difficulty in getting animals that are always suitable in size at the right time of year, and can never get the quantity that he requires from the surrounding districts. When in full running order he will consume 750 per



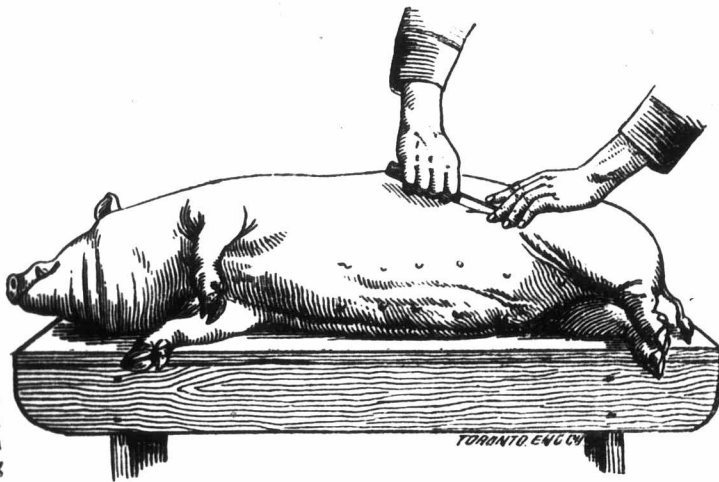
day, and can only get this number by sending long distances. The old fashioned practice of killing large stores must rapidly give way to the improved method of summer killing young pigs. The operation of spaying pigs consists of removing the ovaries, the essential organ of generation in the female, and analogous to the testes of the male. They are two ovid, irregular-shaped bodies smaller than the latter situated in the abdominal cavity. The diagram shows them in situation pinned forward slightly from their proper position, and may be likened to a small

14 to 18 hours before the operation. They should be from one month to six weeks old; they will be then ready for the market at about nine to twelve months of age.

Have the animal held on a bench by two men, one holding the fore legs, the other the hind ones extended. Make an incision in the flank a little below the angle of the hip bone; for general guidance two fingers space may be observed. The hair when present should be clipped or shaved off about a hand space, and with a sharp, broad-bladed spaying or castrating knife make an incision from behind forward, if standing at the back of the pig, with the animal stretched on its right side; if on the left side, from before backwards, about one inch in length, and only through the skin on to the fat. With the nail tear away the tissue until you feel the bowel and search in a backward and upward direction at the entrance of the pelvis bones for the womb, which will be found floating free between the bladder and straight gut. On bringing it up to the opening be quite sure that it is the ovary, and it may be recognized by its color, being slightly red, and the womb being pearly white, the bowels being of a dull lead color. The ovaries are as described above—something like a very small bunch of unripe red grapes, firm, though elastic to the touch. When drawn through the opening the round little balls of vesicles are easily cut off with a scraping motion of the knife. Some men twist them off, but I prefer cutting, as being more expeditious. The lower ovary is brought out and treated the same way. Part of the womb may be brought out in searching for the second ovary, but it must be returned again, the aperture being stitched with a needle and thread, or twisted suture. There is little blood to escape, and should be carefully prevented from falling into the interior of the bowels. Wash the outside with a sponge after returning the parts and accurately stitch the wound with one or two stitches. Remember, the smaller the wound or opening, the less chance there is of any unfavorable results. It is rarely that any evil results follow. The little pig seems to take very little notice. Feed with a bulky ration—not too much at a time. In two or three days the thread of the stitches should be removed, and the effects of the operation are soon manifest by the improvement the animal makes in condition. What seems to be the result of the operation, and why it is so beneficial is that the animal has no period of season or oestrus, and the next six months of its life is engaged in putting on flesh, and the animal is ready for market in August—two months earlier than she would be if left open.

The little pigs begin to feed themselves when about a month old. They should then be fed apart from the mother sow with skim milk, a small quantity of ground oats, wheat or shorts, and spayed at five weeks. Then the quantity of food should be gradually increased until they are ready for the market, and bacon curers require a pig as light in head as possible, light in shoulders, long and deep in ribs, wide in loins, thick in flanks, with hams square and deep, and not strong in bone, but possessing a good coat of hair. The demand is now for almost exclusively light, fleshy meats.

Next to good food, etc., exercise must be counted upon in the attainment and preservation of health; it leads to develop muscle or lean meat instead of fat, thus causing them to be the ideal pig of the buyer. A noticeable fact in the rearing of young spayed pigs is the bones are very immature, and do not grow in the same proportion to the other parts of the body. An opinion that we hold on the subject is that it is due to the deficiency of the lime salts that make up the earthy constituents of bone; therefore, in all cases when spayed pigs are grown for the market, hardwood ashes, or better, bone meal, should be fed with the daily ration. The effect will soon be evident; not only will it build up the bony structures of the body, but will aid digestion, which must be kept at the highest



cluster of unripe mulberries; they are a number of small vesicles or membranous sacs of various sizes, reddish in color. These are the Graafian vesicles in various stages of development. The pig of which the diagram was taken was just approaching her period of season, and is the finest illustration that I have seen.

In the spaying of pigs, there are certain conditions that must never be lost sight of, and point directly to the success or failure of the operation. The first essential condition, is that you must have the bowels comparatively empty by starving or withholding food for about