

Raising English "Wiltshire" Bacon.

THE BONUS SYSTEM INTRODUCED—THE CURER'S IDEAL—BREEDING AND REARING—CROSS-BREEDING—SUMMER AND WINTER FEEDING COMPARED—AN ENGLISH STY DESCRIBED.

(BY OUR ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT.)

Undoubtedly the prevalence of swine fever has for some years greatly interfered with pig-rearing in Britain. The restrictions imposed are so vexatious and unequal that many farmers have been much discouraged and have given up breeding pigs altogether. Still ham and bacon are in demand and some one must supply it, be he home or foreign producer, and to encourage home production Messrs. Harris & Co., of Calne, invited breeders and feeders to send their fat pigs direct to their factory, where they are slaughtered and weighed and the current price forwarded to the owner. This plan of estimating the value of pigs according to their weight, substance and form appears to stimulate pig feeders to breed and fatten the very best pigs, as the benefit is shared by the owner with the buyer. In fact, Messrs. Harris give a bonus of 2s. 6d. on each pig which comes up to a certain standard of merit. The feeder who furnishes the best fat pigs reaps a considerable benefit, sufficient to reward him for the extra cost, care and trouble required to produce first-class bacon pigs. The quick-growing, early-maturing pig is now preferred to the little, fat, puggy pig, or the coarse, overgrown pig, which has now almost if not altogether disappeared.

Each locality feeds for its requirements, and tastes in counties differ. The "cut" of a ham or side of bacon is regulated by local custom, and this is pre-eminently the case in "Wiltshire" or "Irish." Neither does the cure differ,—only the manner of cutting. Of course, the pigs slaughtered should be of a size suited to the business in hand, and if to be cut for "Wiltshire" sides should weigh from 180 to 200 pounds. This would give a fairly sized side, about 72 pounds, without an undue proportion of fat, or a ham about ten pounds. Berkshires, Tamworths, and Yorkshires (or crosses) are well adapted for pork or bacon, but more especially for the latter. The large proportion of lean meat and the admixture of lean and fat render Berkshires superior to any other pure breed for bacon. But of late years thousands of fat pigs have been sent from the midlands and eastern counties into Wiltshire and Somerset. Not only so, but the general quality, form and size of the midland counties pig are said to be exactly such as are required in the manufacture of the most valuable bacon and hams. If this be the case, which I very much doubt, it does seem strange that the bacon-curing industry has not taken hold of the midlands, since labor is nearly as cheap there as in Wiltshire and Somerset.

THE PREFERRED BREEDS.

Various breeds are preferred in different localities, and the bacon pig of Cumberland would not be looked at in Wiltshire. The neat Berkshire, the big and small White Yorkshire, the Essex and the Tamworth, and crosses therefrom, are pigs mostly used for bacon and ham. Bacon-curers like a well-formed, compact animal, fine in bone, deep in carcass, and carrying much lean meat, as they weigh far better and are in more demand at profitable prices. Some years ago breeders of Yorkshire pigs were not slow in discovering that the easiest way of obtaining early maturity was by crossing the large, middle and small white pigs indiscriminately, or to mate a small white boar with a large white sow possessing substance and quality. Subsequently the Tamworth was taken in hand by several breeders for the purpose of crossing with fat pigs so as to please the bacon-curer. Mr. Sanders Spencer, of Holywell Manor, favors the White Yorkshire pigs—large, middle, and small, and crosses therefrom—for bacon and hams; while Mr. John T. Keddie, manager of the Model Farm at Blythwood in Essex, favors the Berkshire. Mr. Blyth, Bart., says a good word for the Berkshire. He observes: "The Improved Berkshire stands at the top of the list of all breeds for the production of the best bacon and ham and for general utility. They are short in the leg, with bone just sufficient for what is necessary and not more. In selecting them care should be taken to have plenty of long, very fine hair, which denotes fine skin and offal. Coarse hair and bristles indicate a thick skin, coarse offal, and generally a bad feeder."

"BREEDING AND REARING."

"The pigs intended for breeding should not be forced young, and it is not policy to buy animals which have been prepared for exhibition with the object of breeding from them, as they invariably breed badly if at all. The breeding animals should not be forced and made fat, but kept in a good, growing condition with boiled potatoes or other roots, bran, and mixed meals, including a little bean meal. The pigs should have plenty of exercise in a nice, cool, shady field during the summer, with a shed or yard to run into, and in winter be furnished with a warm, roomy, covered yard. Young, well-grown sows are usually put to the boar about nine months old, and about a week before they are due to farrow they are put in a

quiet place away from the others, which is kept for the purpose. This place has a firm little rail all round, about nine inches high and one foot from wall. Hence, this prevents the sow getting too close to the wall when farrowing and the mother lying on the young. The straw used for bedding at this time should always be short. The young pigs are generally weaned at nine or ten weeks old, and they should have a warm, dry sty with plenty of ventilation, and above all, plenty of exercise in the stubble fields after harvest and at other times in well-sheltered yards. They should be fed with mashes of barley, maize, etc., mixed with boiled roots, and the refuse from house, garden, etc. As the age for fattening approaches they should be kept to the yards or sheds only and fed three or four times a day with skim or separated milk, if possible, mixed with pollard (shorts), barley, maize, beans, and boiled potatoes or other roots."

CROSS-BREEDING.

On the question of cross-breeding, Mr. Keddie adds: "Now, as to the most suitable cross-bred pigs, I have never had any to compare with the Berkshire boar and Tamworth sow. The Berkshire is noted for early maturity and the Tamworth for its size, quality of meat, small percentage of offal, and large portion of lean meat to fat. These advantages make them, in my opinion, very suitable breeds for crossing, but I know others entertain a different opinion. If proofs were required of the superior quality of Berkshire bacon, it is in the fact that Wiltshire smoked bacon realizes from 3d. to 1d. per pound more than Yorkshire cured. And not only on account of its delicate flavor, but because it is found to go further. Hence, 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating.'" Mr. Sanders Spencer observes: "The results from the crossing of Tamworth and Berkshire pigs affords a strong proof of the advisability of following this system. Although the present styles of Berkshire and Tamworth pigs do not possess many points in common, yet it is an admitted fact that both breeds possessed common ancestors of a similar type. A striking proof is afforded of this in that the produce of Berkshire boars and Tamworth sows, if

food, was required to produce one pound increased weight in each pig in winter than in summer. At least eight per cent. of food was saved by fattening pigs in summer as compared with winter.

SANDERS SPENCER'S BREEDING PENS.

Great differences exist in the housing of pigs, and the best, cleanest, and most comfortable sties I have seen were at the Farm Colony at Hadleigh Castle in Essex and at Mr. Salisbury Baxendale's, at Bonningtons, Ware, in Herts. But we prefer to transcribe Mr. Spencer's idea of what a sty should be. Sties for sows and young pigs should face the south or south-west, and some of the best piggeries are converted out of old-fashioned barns. The temperature is more equable, and the freedom from currents of air particularly noticeable. The majority of these barns are thatched with straw or reeds, so that they are warm in winter and cool in summer. At Holywell Manor Mr. Spencer has sties of different shapes and sizes. An old barn is converted into eight sties, a lofty shed furnishes another eight, while a second shed is fitted up with eight sties in which the sows farrow during the colder weather. As the autumn approaches the roof is crammed with wheat straw, which renders the place very warm and yet airy; the front of the shed is boarded up, in which there are two double doors and ventilators, so that the temperature can be fairly well regulated, considering that there is no means for artificially heating in severe weather. In the back part of the shed are two doors, which are set open in summer, so that a thorough draft is obtained without the occupants of the two sets of four sties being injuriously affected. Then for the young boars and growing pigs there is a row of eight sties, 10 feet by 11 feet. These face the south. At right angles with this row is another of seven sties, 9 feet by 11 feet, facing the west. These sties are all 7 feet on the side walls, have double doors and ventilation fore and aft, so that in the very coldest weather these can be closed and the sties rendered sufficiently warm, whilst in summer a current of air is obtained above the pigs. The partitions are only about 4 feet high. In the winter time some of these are extended to the roof by nailing up old bags, but in hot weather these temporary divisions are removed, and thus the whole of the sties are rendered cool and sweet. Some buildings close in the west side, so that a square some 30 yards by 25 yards is formed, in which each of the various lots of pigs are allowed to take exercise on most days for a short time, and are thus kept healthy and hardy. More pigs are injured by want of exercise than from having too much freedom. Overfeeding and the general want of exercise frequently cause little pigs to suffer from cramp or rheumatic gout. A dry lair, however, is necessary for young pigs in the autumn and winter months.

W. O. Highbury Park, N. London, Sept. 22nd, 1898.



MATCHLESS 15TH, RED, AND MILDRED 6TH, ROAN; THE PROPERTY OF J. & W. E. WATT, SALEM, ONT. THESE TWO-YEAR-OLD HEIFERS ARE BY ROYAL SAILOR (IMP), AND ARE VERY EVENLY BALANCED. MILDRED WON 1ST AT TORONTO, AND MATCHLESS 2ND, WHILE AT LONDON THEIR POSITIONS WERE REVERSED. THEY WERE ALSO PRIZE-WINNERS IN 1897.

bred together, produce pigs very similar in form and character to animals of the first cross; that is, their parents. The blood blends so much better than does that of two breeds having nothing in common, or not having comparatively recently originated from somewhat similar sources." Therefore it is deemed advisable to select for the purpose two breeds or varieties which have many qualities in common.

SUMMER FEEDING MOST PROFITABLE.

In Britain it frequently happens that the pig breeder is not the feeder or fatterer. This division of labor often causes inconvenience, especially as young pigs cannot be moved on account of special restrictions. On some farms the produce can be more profitably utilized with breeding sows and young pigs than by fattening pigs or the reverse. Again, some farmers consider it cheaper to buy store pigs than to breed them, but Mr. Spencer is not of that way of thinking. He believes in combination of the breeding and fattening processes, as a farmer is thus enabled to possess better pigs, which will fatten more readily and realize higher prices at market. Mr. Spencer says that "Dairy offals, with grass in summer and roots in winter, would keep the sows in good condition, providing a few beans or peas were given to each sow for two or three weeks prior to farrowing. The majority of really well-bred sows would become quite fresh if allowed the run of a grass field and given whey to drink. In some districts a strong objection exists against allowing pigs to feed on a pasture, but we hold to the belief that no cheaper or quicker plan can be followed to improve grass land than by grazing it with pigs which also receive additional food produced on the farm, whether it be skim or butter milk, whey or corn. Peas, beans or maize should be well soaked, or a goodly proportion of the corn will pass through the pigs undigested." Mr. Spencer relates that an attempt was made to determine the food required in summer and in winter to produce a given increase. One hundred winter and ninety-nine summer experiments were carried out. Each experiment included 25 to 30 animals, and about 5,000 were utilized. The animals ate very little more in winter than in summer, but 4.4 pounds, or nearly 1/2 pound more

The Nova Scotia Provincial Exhibition.

The directors of the Nova Scotia Provincial Exhibition, held at Halifax, Sept. 22nd to 29th, had made provision for what promised to be the most successful event of the kind ever held in the Province, and so far as the exhibits were concerned it was fully up to their expectations, the entries in live stock and agricultural and horticultural products, being large and of excellent quality; but the elements were decidedly against the management, and three solid days of rain proved a damper on their spirits and diminished the attendance to such an extent that a considerable deficit had to be faced. On the odd fine days granted the attendance was very good, being estimated at from 15,000 to 20,000. The exhibition is held under the joint auspices of the Provincial Government and the City of Halifax, a board of commissioners composed of representatives of each of these having charge of the management of the show, a fortunate arrangement, as the deficit will not seriously affect any individual. The exhibition grounds at Halifax are roomy and well planned, the main building being very large and handsome, the stock barns and sheds comfortable and well arranged, and the half-mile driving track a first-class one. The commissioners in charge of the various departments are faithful in the discharge of their duties, and all the officials courteous and attentive to the wants of exhibitors and visitors.

HORSES.

The display of horses in the harness classes was very good, the entries being numerous and the quality, in many cases, of a high order. In the breeding classes the animals were not shown in the blooming condition we are accustomed to see them brought out at the western fairs, and while there were many excellent representatives of the Shire and Clyde breeds, and some very good ones in the carriage and roadster classes, the moderate condition in which they are presented fails to inspire enthusiasm.

CATTLE.

The cattle classes, both in the beef and dairy divisions, were well filled with meritorious animals, well-fitted and exceedingly creditable to their owners. Prof. Day, of the Ontario Agricultural College, was the single judge in all the