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SWINE DEPARTMENT

Our readers are invited to ask questions in regard to swine. These will be answered in this department. You are also invited to offer helpful suggestions or relate experiences through these columns.

The Best Crop for Alberta

August Wolf, Edmonton, Alta.

Hon. Archibald McLean, who was a bonanza cattle rancher on the prairies prior to accepting the portfolio as provincial secretary for Alberta in Premier Sifton's cabinet, has become a convert to the homely hog as the real money-maker on the farm.

"The hog is the stock for the farmer without much capital," said Mr. McLean, who is conceded to be the best informed stock-grower in the provincial government, in the course of an interview at the Parliament Building in Edmonton. "Considering the amounts of money involved," he added, "I have made more out of pigs in the last few years than I ever earned with beef cattle.

The rancher-cabinet minister would only speculate in fond imagination upon how wealthy he might have become had his steers paid as large profits as the porkers. Continuing in his praise of the pig, he said among other things:

"A farmer can buy a sow for from $10 to $20. In six months or so, there is a litter, not less than six pigs. Then, in a short while, the farmer would be able to sell each of the six pigs in the litter for what he paid for the sow. For the little amount of money invested, there's nothing to beat pigs. The supply is coming up, monthly getting nearer the demand. In a short while I believe the farmers in Alberta will be supplying all the pork the province needs."

"Why do you recommend farmers to go in for pigs when the supply is increasing so rapidly?" the interviewer asked.

"Because," said the minister quickly, "there is no good reason why the farmers should not receive prices paid at Winnipeg for their pigs all the time. The mistake at present is that a farmer brings a wagon load of pigs to town without knowing whether there is a demand for pigs on that particular day. If the packing houses and butchers have all they require, only a price beneath that prevailing in the Winnipeg or Calgary markets can be procured, or else the farmer has to take his pigs home again. Since he does not want to do the latter, he usually has to accept the lower price."

"How can that be obviated?" was asked; "a farmer cannot know beforehand whether the town's butchers have killed all the pigs they require to supply the trade."

Mr. McLean answered the question by asking another: "Why should the farmer take his pigs to the town markets? The grower can do much better by selling his pigs on the farm. Let the buyer go to the pigs.

"The principal difficulty at present is that the average buyer will not go out to see pigs unless there is a carload lot, about 100 animals. The farmers in a given locality could congregate their pigs. With enough to fill a car they could easily get into touch with a buyer. It is worth a buyer's while to see those pigs. The farmers are benefited to the extent of being offered the highest prices. They are not, then, dependent upon whether the town butcher has or has not, the morning the farmer arrived in town, bought all the pigs he wants."

The cabinet minister, who is thoroughly acquainted with the various districts in Alberta, from the international boundary on the south to the Peace River country on the north, give it as his opinion that the thousands of homesteaders who have come into the province during the last few years will pay more attention to mixed farming, including hog raising, than those earlier settlers; "and," he added, "there is every reason to believe that Alberta will be an exporter of pork and hog products within a few years."

Experiments in Swine Feeding

R. W. Clarke, Animal Husbandman at the Montana Agricultural College, has recently conducted experiments to test cheaper pork producing and also to find what are the best combinations of feeds, the grain feeds for economical production. He summarizes his results as follows:

1. In feeding trials with shorts, barley, and frosted wheat, each with sugar beets, the shorts ration produced the most economical gains.

2. Rations of frosted wheat and sugar beets, and frosted wheat, shorts and sugar beets, were not as efficient as shorts and sugar beets. The ration of frosted wheat and beets was made more efficient by the addition of shorts.

3. Shorts as a single food or shorts mixture, was more efficient than barley, frosted wheat or frosted barley, each fed alone or in combination.

4. Wheat frozen in the advanced dough stage had nearly the same feeding value as unfrozen wheat.

5. 5. Adding alfalfa hay to rations of shorts, frosted barley, or a ration of equal parts of these two grains, did not change the relative value of the different rations.

6. In feeding shorts alone, wheat alone, and a mixture of equal parts of shorts and wheat, the best gains were secured with shorts and the smallest with wheat.

7. Shorts fed alone and a mixture of barley and blood meal produced larger gains than wheat.

8. Alfalfa hay added to a ration of shorts and skim milk increased the gain and decreased the cost of production.

9. Of all the single grains fed, none on the average gave better results than shorts.

10. In feeding frosted grain and sugar beets the efficiency of the rations was increased when shorts were added. Clover or alfalfa hay increased the gain and decreased the cost of production. Contrary to common belief, the addition of such hay to rations of frosted grain and barley is beneficial. If wheat that has been frosted when far advanced in the dough stage can be purchased at a reduced price, it can be fed with as good results as unfrosted wheat and with greater profit. The ration of barley and blood meal fed to shotes did not give any better results than shorts alone.

11. Five sows farrowed 29 pigs, and in 12 months they and their pigs produced a total gain of 4,894 pounds and consumed 19,167 pounds of grain, 2,405 pounds of skim milk, 125.5 pounds of dried blood, and 4,598 pounds of clover and alfalfa hay. The total cost of feeding the sows and pigs at prices then prevailing was $215.13 and the value of the gain $318.11, showing a profit of $102.98.

12. In summer on irrigated pasture, mature dry sows required 2.3 pounds of grain per hundred pounds live weight per day to maintain their live weights, while in winter, with all the clover hay they would eat, one pound of grain per hundred pounds live weight per day was required.