

The Feeders' Corner

The Feeders' Corner is for the use of our subscribers. Any interested persons are invited to ask questions, or send items of interest. All questions will receive prompt attention.

Light on Cattle Feeding

J. Eldridge, Bruce Co., Ont.

TO throw some light on Mr. Squire's recent experience in feeding cattle for the agreed price of six cents for every pound gained in weight, it seems to me that under the circumstances this price was too low.

It is a common custom for farmers to take in feeders and feed five months or more to get one cent a pound live weight when taken in and an additional six cents a pound for every pound gained. This price was paid previous to the years ago when the prices of cattle were considerably lower than at present.

I have kept track of the cost of feeding cattle a couple of times and was not very well pleased with the result of one experience. To keep an account of the cost for a couple of years means some trouble. As we have experimental farms for this purpose I will refer to those reports.

The report of the Live Stock Association of Ontario for 1904 contains an article on "Raising Baby Beef." At the Experimental Farm, Ottawa, it was found that the average cost of feed to raise calves up to six months old was 24¢ a pound live weight. If you feed them from six months to 12 months the average cost is from four to five cents to continue from one year to two years old, the cost of putting on a pound of gain, if on pasture alone, in the summer is from five to six cents and to continue for another year the cost is from seven to ten cents. In addition to this the statement is made.

"We expect steers to put on two pounds a day from the start until they are ready for the block. If they do not make about 700 pounds a year, then there is something wrong; especially is this true for the first year. Cattle gaining at this rate have very often failed to gain in weight during the months of either July or August.

A similar occurrence must have happened to the four head of cattle which boarded at Mr. Squire's farm for forty seven days and gained only 68 pounds. Now if the cost is five cents a pound on pasture alone, then cents a pound is not enough; it should be five cents a day per head.

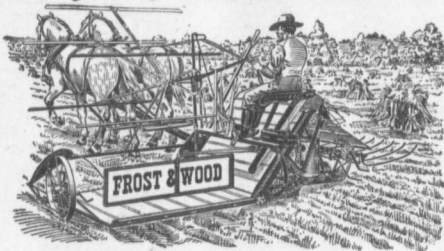
A later report for the year of 1908 shows that 40 steers in six months gained 425 pounds each at a feed cost of something like \$18 per steer. Other steers have gained as much as 70 to 100 pounds in two weeks on a palatable ration of ensilage, roots and straw as much as they would eat."

Feed Above Maintenance

It takes from one half to two thirds of a "full feed" to maintain an animal. Hence there is no increase in flesh, etc., especially what is eaten in excess of the food of support. The secret of success in cattle raising is to know how to fill them to the top notch with palatable food without overfeeding and make them grow during their growing period. Calves are the most neglected animals on the farms. Everything else such as their dams, therefore calves need as much attention as fast growing bunches of hogs and require a variety of meals, fodder, and roots. When beef cattle are finished for the market at the age of 2 to 2½ years the feed cost is 50 per cent, less than for cattle of the same marketable value, but a year older.

I have raised baby heaves a couple of times and think that where there

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is sufficient help it is the most profitable method to follow.

As I have endeavored to show the most profitable way to raise cattle I will now turn my attention to the unprofitable way. According to Mr. Squire's figures it cost him 86 cents to put on a pound of gain. We all know that straw is not a maintenance diet and as I understand it about 17 per cent of its nutritive value is taken up in the energy required to chew and digest it. This explains why cattle fed on straw come out of the stable in the spring about 25 per cent lighter in weight than when they went in, in the fall. This method of caring for cattle and finishing at four years old is the right way to lose money as it probably costs 86 cents to put on a pound of gain.

Oil Cake Meal

I HAVE been making a study of feeding analysis and in comparing them I find that cottonseed is apparently somewhat cheaper than oil cake meal. I have not used oil cake largely. These feeders must know that oil cake is not economical, according to feeding analysis. Why do they continue to feed it? I want to be clear on this subject.—Subscriber, Peterboro, Ont.

In an average year, cottonseed meal is a somewhat cheaper food for dairy cows than is oil meal. The difference, however, unless it be in an exceptional year such as last year, is never very wide. The reason that oil cake maintains its prime position of popularity is due to properties that it has, altogether outside of its nu-

tritive value. Cottonseed meal, unless wisely fed, is apt to derange the digestive organs. Oil cake, on the other hand, is a regulator. Heavy feeding with oil cake places less of a strain on the animal's system than with cottonseed. Perhaps the wisest plan of all is to feed oil cake and

cottonseed together, thus combining the cheapness of one with the regulating qualities of the other. For young animals, oil cake is an exceptionally good feed and cottonseed should be fed on no consideration whatsoever. In fact, some feeders have found it positively poisonous for calves.

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