

CORRESPONDENCE

Prices for Bacon Hogs

Toronto Market Unsatisfactory—Drovers Do Better at Buffalo

To the Editor of FARMING:

I have read several articles at different times in your valuable farming paper on the hog market, giving a great deal of advice to farmers on producing hogs, which I think is not necessary, as the farmers are well up to their business. They were advised that they could not over-stock the English market with Canadian bacon, as it sold so much better than the American. What are the farmers getting now? Why, the past year hogs in Buffalo have been selling higher than in Toronto. Those that are culled in Toronto are in Buffalo only a few cents per cwt. under the best. The fact is, four dollars per cwt. in Buffalo is as good as \$4.50 in Toronto, because of the way they are culled. In Buffalo hogs are always fed and watered in large closed-in buildings, as comfortable as the pen they left at home. How is it in Toronto? Why, they are left in the car freezing all night in winter, and crowding and suffocating each other in summer. It is really cruelty to animals. All other animals are unloaded and fed. Why should hogs not be? Just because the packers will it so. There is just one buyer in Toronto for hogs, and if a drover should feed his hogs it would be the worse for him.

There should be a law that all animals should be fed on arrival at the market. They certainly require it after the unmerciful pounding they get in the car, caused by the air-brakes now used or *misused*. There is no knowing how long the hogs have been on the way. There is another injustice. Some drovers travel 100 to 150 miles, others 10 or 20 miles. Some hogs will be over 30 hours and some three or four hours off feed, but both have to accept the same price, while if they were all fed it would make them equal. As to the remarks on the deterioration of the Canadian hog in your last paper, why, you should not print such stuff.

I have had a long experience in the matter, and say that there has been more improvement in Canadian hogs than any other animals. Think of the grand show of hogs in Toronto last fall. It could not be beaten in America. I know that farmers feed and attend better than ever before. Many have built splendid pig-pens. Years ago, any pen was thought good enough. If Canadian hogs are soft, why all the hogs in Buffalo are soft also; but they fetch more money. Besides, the Americans send three hogs to England to Canada's one.

A farmer said to me a few days ago: "We will have to say good-bye to Mr. Hog, as the average farmer cannot produce them less than \$4.50 per cwt." Though scientific gentlemen write that they can produce them for \$2.50, it is only on paper. If it could be done for that no other animals would be raised on the farm.

FARMER AND DROVER.

The "Slump" in Hogs.

Packers' Methods Criticized---Work for the New Commissioner.

To the Editor of FARMING:

The Canadian bacon business is certainly in a bad way. With hogs, general run, only \$3.90 at Toronto, and the best ideal bacon hogs only \$4, which means, probably \$3.75 for the feeders, there is little encouragement for swine-raisers. In Prince Edward Island prices for the last month, and up to this week were better than at Toronto, \$4.25 being the top price, but this week prices are down as low as \$3, and from that up to \$4. It is reported by the Charlottetown papers that there is a combine among the pork-packers here, and the prices at present look very like it, for even this week, dressed hogs are only worth here, 4c. to 4 3/4c. per lb.

What has become of our boasted Canadian bacon in-

dustry in the last three months? Since September the corn-fed hogs of the United States, which our Canadian packers speak of with such contempt, are fetching much better prices than our ideal pea-fed bacon hogs, and at this writing, prices in Chicago and Buffalo still continue to be better than those in the highest Canadian centres. In the last two weeks bacon has been steadily rising in Britain, and is now 4s. higher than two weeks ago, and yet Canadian prices are steadily declining.

Last year the decline in prices at this time took place, but not to such an extent as this year. Can the Canadian packers afford to pay better prices than they are now paying? Certainly, they can. Here is the case in a nutshell. For two or more years past the Canadian packers have forced prices up in the months of July and August when they know there are very few hogs then marketed. Last year the packers forced the prices in August up to \$6.12 per cwt. and this last August prices were forced up to \$5.50. This forced price was paid at a loss, for the British markets did not this year, as last, warrant the packers in paying such high prices. But the packers had a motive, and, while it may be a business motive, was certainly not an honest one. By paying high prices in July and August, when *few hogs were moving*, they encourage farmers to begin feeding and preparing their spring hogs for market; for who that has any spring pigs on hand will not begin feeding them for the market when hogs are selling for \$5 to \$6 per cwt.? The packers, having thus succeeded in fooling the farmers, and getting them started feeding their spring pigs, they now leisurely haul down the prices, so that before the time that the bulk of the spring pigs are ready for market the price is down to rock bottom as at present. The packers can very well afford to lose a few hundred in the summer months only to scoop in a few thousands in the fall months. It's a case of "throwing a sprat to catch a rat."

The present status of the Canadian swine industry is clearly a case where the Minister of Trade and Commerce should interfere and endeavour to regulate the business on an equitable basis. Sir Richard Cartwright has now an opportunity to do something for the farmers by coming to the assistance of the swine-raisers. It will not do Sir Richard to be a mere "looker-on," as he described himself at Toronto. Sir Richard's Department can be fraught with interminable good for the farmers of Canada, if that able and talented gentleman wills it. Surely the \$600,000,000 of the Canadian farmers' products is an important feature of Canadian trade and commerce!

No doubt, also, this is a case where the new Commissioner of Live Stock, Mr. F. W. Hodson, can do something to place the farmers' live hogs on an equitable basis, and protect the growers and feeders from a soulless and greedy market. Mr. Hodson begins work in his new sphere of labor the first of this month, and there is no question of his absolute fitness for the position, and no doubt of his perfect friendliness for the farmers. No one man probably has done more with his powerful pen and his business tact for the farmers of Ontario than Mr. Hodson. Let us hope and trust that now, in his wider capacity, he will, if he possibly can, come to the rescue of the Canadian hog raiser.

J. A. MACDONALD.

King's Co., P.E.I., Dec. 4, 1899.

Cause of Soft Pork

To the Editor of FARMING:

I saw in one of your late issues of FARMING a number of articles on feeding, and what was the cause of soft pork. One was a report of a lot killed by the Guelph Agricultural College some being soft and the others hard. I killed eight pigs last week all of the same litter, graded Berkshire, about seven months old. They averaged about 160 lbs. each and were fed on skim-milk, potatoes and Indian meal. One was quite soft, the other seven quite hard. How do you account for this? They were all fed together.

Should like to get a reply through some of your correspondents.

G. MACKINSON.

Cross Roads, Cochrane Dale, Dec. 4th, 1899.