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The Dressed Beef Trade

The Outlook as Based on English Market Conditions

THE movement to establish the dressed meat trade in this country on a large scale is worthy of careful consideration by every one interested in the development of the live stock industry of this country. That this country is in a position to establish a large trade of this kind very few will doubt, and just now the time seems very opportune for getting the business under way and opening up a market in the old land. Our farmers, however, must be educated up to the necessity of producing a better class of beef cattle than they are now doing. A dressed meat trade cannot be successfully developed unless there is in the country the right quality of cattle or sheep to back it up. Then there should be a sufficient quantity of the right kind of stuff to keep a large establishment going all the year round. To keep up the supply our farmers must learn to feed and fit their animals for market, and not sell them off as stockers when a year or two old to the first drover who comes along.

The dressed meat trade with Great Britain has grown enormously during recent years. To all appearance the demand for live foreign cattle and sheep is steadily falling off in the United Kingdom, as the trade in refrigerator and frozen meats from various countries becomes more firmly established. Some figures published in a recent issue of the Chicago "Live Stock Report," and which were carefully compiled by a large English firm dealing in this trade, show pretty clearly the tendency of the live and dressed cattle trades as we have indicated.

The following figures show the total weight of United States and Canadian refrigerated beef, Australian, New Zealand and South American (River Platte) frozen beef, and Continental fresh killed beef imported by the United Kingdom for the years 1899 and 1900:

FROM	Lbs. 1899.	Lbs. 1900.
United States.....	275,679,600	286,723,800
Australia.....	60,921,600	39,519,100
River Platte.....	15,036,800	41,196,200
New Zealand.....	13,442,700	32,946,700
Canada.....	9,023,800	4,508,400
Continent.....	6,157,700	7,936,800
Totals.....	380,262,200	412,831,000

The imports of live cattle for the past two years were as follows:

FROM	No. HEAD. 1899.	No. HEAD. 1900.
United States.....	321,229	350,209
Canada.....	94,660	104,328
South America.....	85,365	38,562
Other Countries.....	2,250	2,035
Totals.....	503,504	495,134

The most striking fact in connection with the first table is the material increase in the total amount of beef consumed, and in spite of the fact that large shipments of frozen meats were diverted from the Australian colonies to South Africa, China and the Philippines for army purposes. A new field seems to be opening up for refrigerated meats in supplying British and American troops engaged in active service. Then the quality of nearly all the dressed meats sent to England during 1900 shows considerable improvement, especially those coming from South America. The closing of British ports to live cattle from that country greatly increased the exports of dressed beef, and along with it came a remarkable improvement in quality. Frozen carcasses from South America brought prices from below Australian almost up to a par with New Zealand quotations. The top Australian hindquarters reached 14c. per lb. This improvement in quality, which was quite noticeable in the dressed meats from all sources, is due largely to greater care in packing shipments and in the general conduct of the business. Several successful experiments were made last year in bringing beef from the River Platte to England in a chilled condition, and arrangements are being made for small regular shipments with the mail steamers, which make the trip in twenty-one days.

The United States and Canada practically have had a monopoly of the live cattle trade with Great Britain since the embargo on South American cattle, but as the totals of the second table show, there was a decrease of 8,370 cattle in 1900 as compared with the year previous. The shipments from the United States and Canada, however, show considerable increases but not enough to make up for the large shrinkages in South American shipments, which it is doubtful will ever be up to what they formerly were.

The foregoing gives a pretty clear idea as to the general trend of matters in so far as the