

THE HOG QUESTION IN EASTERN ONTARIO.

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

Notwithstanding the airing the hog question has received from the pen of experienced, practical feeders, through the medium of the agricultural press, and with the several opinions of our agricultural experts clearly stated, their opinions being the result of carefully-conducted experiments under most favorable conditions, there still seems to be a divided opinion resting with the producers concerning the industry. The tumult raised by the Western producers of our Province about a year ago was quietly observed by the Eastern Ontario producers, without any very decisive action being taken. What the result was in the immediate vicinity of the controversy, we have never definitely learned.

To discourage the hog industry in Eastern Ontario would mean a deficiency in the annual revenue from our farms of such an amount that many a farmer would quite naturally find himself sorely handicapped in meeting the financial outlay necessitated in present-day farming operations. The hog bears the appellation, "mortgage-lifter," and, while we have a great deal less mortgage-lifting to be done than a few years previous, there is still room for the bacon hog to expend his energy financially in paying rents and still help; and, as a liquidator of indebtedness, he still proves a reliable medium. That the hog business has been working backwards throughout the winter and fall months, we quite agree—feedstuffs ever soaring, and the prices for the product ever falling. Just why it is so, is not easy to explain, although it seems to me to only more fully exemplify that the farmer is ever the victim to suffer, whether he has to sell or whether he goes to buy. While farmers are paying extravagant prices for feed, they should surely be able to demand a price for the product that would compensate for labor and investment; but, on the contrary, whoever rules the price, continues to rule it lower. Nevertheless, the hog industry has a firm hold in Eastern Ontario, and, as I have followed the contributions of many Western Ontario feeders who are somewhat dissatisfied with the industry, some going so far as to abandon it, I am convinced that these men were not growing hogs under the same conditions as Eastern Ontario farmers are. Present conditions affecting the industry, viz., prices of feeds and scarcity of same, and prices ruling for the finished product, again give rise to a renewed review of the pros and cons of the industry.

In the eastern portion of the Province we are practically, to a man, dairy farmers, and have learned to regard the dairying and bacon business as sister industries, inseparable, if the greatest profit be gained from either, the hogs making a use of the by-product from the dairy that would otherwise be lost, there being no other means of profitable consumption of this by-product in quantities obtainable on the farm. So we have come to regard the two industries as one, and, if for no other reason, this one is sufficient to maintain for the bacon industry a stable basis here. The coming season finds us pretty evenly stocked, for we very fortunately have never been swayed by the vigorous protests of many against the bacon hog as a profitable medium on the farm. This fall past we read of great slaughter among the brood sows in many districts, many having been unloaded on the packer and otherwise disposed of. I think the number in Eastern Ontario has suffered but slight diminution, and already there is being evidenced a bright prospect for sale of any surplus in the spring litters, but there will be very few offered. That it is very essential to greatest profit in feeding that the feeder have his pigs produced on his farm, I am fully convinced. I think I may be correct in stating that the Central Experimental Farm, at Ottawa, by experiment, estimates the cost of keep per brood sow per year at approximately \$16. Allowing a sow two litters per year, and allowing she rears a fair average, she very handsomely pays her way. But I am satisfied that, on the ordinary-sized farm, where a variety of crops are grown, and accordingly a large amount of varied refuse about the farm, the brood sows can be carried in numbers not exceeding five, at a somewhat lower estimate than that made at the Central Experimental Farm. We are enabled, through having considerable by-products from our dairy throughout the year, to keep our pens pretty evenly stocked at all times. By so doing, we do not necessarily have our stock of feeders divided in two distinct lots—i. e., summer and winter feeders—but rather try to have the litters coming throughout the year at such intervals that they conveniently follow the ones finishing. This equalizes work in caring for a large number and the outlay for feed.

True, the bacon industry has not been advocated as strenuously with us as with the West-

ern growers, nor have we ever gone into the business on such a large scale generally as we learn of many Western growers doing. We have always regarded the business as a side-line, going hand in hand with the dairy business. The growers here have never sought to grow the ideal bacon hog solely, and it is our regret that a more decided stand had not been taken on this phase of the industry earlier. We have produced a lot of the rapid-growers, so-called; at least, that was our impression. We sought to produce pounds in the shortest time, for the lowest estimated cost per pound. Then, as now, we were after dollars in the hog business, and a pound of pork was worth the market price; type of hog was not considered by drovers in making selections. They offered no discrimination, so what was to give impetus to the introduction generally of the approved bacon type? Actual experience is fast dispelling the prejudice against the bacon type. Pure-bred sires of the bacon-type breeds are being disseminated throughout the districts where formerly hogs of the short, thick type were used. The results of the introduction of bacon types at the several swine sales held throughout Eastern Ontario last spring, under the management of the Pork-packers' Committee, of the Montreal Produce Merchants' Association, have been very gratifying. We firmly believe there is more money in the industry for us in producing that hog that most closely approaches the ideal bacon type than in producing the short, thick fats, so undesirable with the packers. At first, loud claims were made for the thick fats as a grass hog and easy-keeper. These ideas have long since been relegated to the background. In our experience as feeders of bacon hogs, we find that, at present high prices of feedstuffs, we cannot long afford to board any hog for the sake of his company or numbers; they must be doing their best from birth to maturity to bring the largest and quickest returns. It is no extravagant claim for feeding that bacon hogs can, when properly handled, be made to average two hundred pounds at six months of age. The success or failure in many of the feeding tests made rests so completely with the feeder that little claim can be made for breed or type.

Hogs cannot be fed to greatest profit in an indifferent way. A very careful and judicious selection and dealing of feed is imperative for best results. Such a feeder will soon come to discern between the best and poorest doers in selection of brood sows, and I am convinced, if selection counts for anything in any class of live stock, it counts for most in hogs. There is such an astounding difference in the use two hogs of different feeding or assimilative powers will make of the same amount of feed, and the returns made to the feeder.

In feeding to gain most profit from the by-product of the dairy, and at the same time carry the greatest number of feeders, a grave mistake is often made in the use of whey or skim milk. It is an extravagant use of either feeds to use in great quantities, with a small allowance of meal. Many farmers still use only what feed is produced on the farm in their hog-feeding operations, and such feeders often have a larger amount of whey or skim milk from their dairy than they have hogs to consume advantageously. In such instances, this feed is used extravagantly, and not the greatest profit possible derived from same. An experiment, conducted at the Central Experimental Farm a short time ago, very clearly demonstrated this point. Of course, these men do not evince any dissatisfaction as regards profits from their feeding, but I am inclined to think they could make more money out of the amount of whey and skim milk by feeding more judiciously in conjunction with more meal, i. e., if they feel so inclined, and have help and room to do so.

I conclude that, as with all other classes of live stock, much failure in the hog business is due to feeders attempting to feed too large a number on insufficient feed, in insufficient quarters, and receiving insufficient attention from the feeder in charge. I believe that, in working these industries, viz., dairying and bacon production, in conjunction, it would be impractical to give an infallible rule as to number of cows kept. A corresponding number of hogs may be kept at different seasons, but rather, the manager of the farm should exercise such foresight as will enable him to have on hand at all times of the year a number of hogs sufficient to profitably consume whatever by-products from the dairy there may be, not at any time overstepping either way the limit of greatest profit from either source.

By exercising the same good judgment and management about the piggery as is essential to make any other department of the farm profitable, I am sure an equally satisfactory profit can be derived from the bacon hog. There are a great many very successful farmers in Eastern Ontario, and I venture to say that the consensus of opinion of these men is that the production of dairy products and the production of the bacon hog combine to make the most profitable line of farm husbandry to hand as yet.

Dundas Co., Ont.

CLARK HAMILTON.

BELIEVES IN THE DUAL-PURPOSE SHORTHORN.

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

I see the editorial in your issue of Jan. 9th, re the dual-purpose cow, has brought out a good deal of useful discussion, and as I have been engaged most of my time in mixed farming and breeding cattle with my father and for myself for over fifty years, I will give your readers a little of my experience.

Our first lot of cows were practically pure-bred although not recorded, being descended from Shorthorns imported from England by Roland Winfield, an Englishman, to Guelph, Ont., in 1833. The cows, as I remember them, were a large, smooth, even lot, with clean-cut heads and very feminine, stylish and pleasing appearance, and were excellent milkers, or at least I thought so, as I often got from 12 to 16 quarts per milking from each cow when on good pasture; and, as my father came from near Huntly, one of the best cattle districts in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, he would use nothing but the best bulls he could find, and had no use for crossing in breeding animals of any kind. Consequently, we kept the milking and beef qualities, and improved them. And, when starting a Shorthorn herd, some 30 years ago, I selected a few cows of English breeding, with a few Scotch top crosses. These cows, I thought, were equally as good milkers and rather better feeders than the cows we had formerly, and since then I have added pure Scotch-bred and imported Scotch cows, and have used nothing but Scotch-bred or imported Scotch bulls, and the milking qualities have not deteriorated in the least, but the beefing qualities have improved. I never used a nurse cow on my farm, but, when stock was low in price and dairying good, I have put two calves on one cow, and sent milk of a few cows to cheese factory, and always got more money per cow than any of my neighbors did from same number of grade cows. Prof. Dean, of the O. A. C., says that about fifteen years ago they had no trouble in buying Shorthorn grade cows in the vicinity of Guelph that filled the bill well as dual-purpose cows, but they are not to be found now. Why is it thus? Is it not that there, as well as here, the farmers have used so many different breeds in order to try to improve the milking qualities of their cows that they have bred nearly all the good old Shorthorn blood out of them, and the milking qualities with it, and what kind of a mixture have they left? I think you might call it hash. Now, I think the cause of a number of Shorthorns not giving satisfactory results at the pail is, as I have observed for the last forty years or more, in keeping them too fat, both as calves and when older. The heifer calves should not be allowed to suck their dams, or, if raised that way, there should be two or three put on one cow, according to age, and then fed about two-thirds the amount generally fed to grades of same age. They will grow up well, and should be bred at about eighteen months, and you will nearly always get good milkers and regular breeders. Another mistake often made by parties wanting to buy a cow or heifer to improve their stock is in wanting to buy the fattest cow or heifer a breeder has; they won't buy a thin one. They say they have nearly as good cows at home, and consequently they often buy one that has not been bred to produce young enough, or one that is not a regular breeder, and, of course, such get too old and fat before being milked to milk well for the first year; and as they are mostly always good beef, the buyers want them, and tell you that the Shorthorns are no use to milk, and won't raise their calves, and, as this kind is not satisfactory the first season, the buyers generally get them, and the farmer won't try them again. Then, others will let the calf suck for a few months, and when they think it big enough to wean they try to milk the cow, and a pure-bred, as well as a grade, is very apt to do some kicking, and hold up her milk for some time after the calf is taken off. They get tired of them and let them go for beef. I have had a few of that kind that made good milkers the second year and afterwards. I think the Shorthorns we have will milk as well as any we can import, if used and fed for milkers as they are in England. I don't think that using thick, beefy Scotch bulls will injure the milking qualities of our cows in the least. I have used a number of them, as good and thick as I could get them, and have had some cows with three to five top-crosses of such bulls, and they milk as well and some of them better than any of the good old kind my father used to keep. By using good thick, smooth, stylish Shorthorn bulls—not necessarily imported bulls, either—on our pure-bred and grade Shorthorn cows, we can produce the ideal dual-purpose cow that will give a large flow of milk rich enough, as Mr. Miller says, to raise the children on, and will produce butter and beef fit for a king.

Huron Co., Ont.

DAVID MILNE.