

A Pig Feeder from Early Life.

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

"The Farmer's Advocate" has asked for experience in hog feeding, and as I have been on the job since I was about ten years old, perhaps, I may have learned something good enough to pass along. The reason I started so soon to find out what the pig's nature demanded was because my father was away feeding the two-legged race on latin and other roots, and putting the curl on the tail of the little fellow in the pen fell to me. My first recollection of hog feeding is seeing my grandfather with a wooden yoke, across his shoulders, on which hung two pails filled with boiled peas from a huge cooler hanging in the stone chimney of the old house. That yoke set me thinking, is the farmer merely a beast of burden too tired to think, and letting others tell him that the manure from the hog-pen was profit enough for him, and that the feed he grew cost nothing? My father had taught me differently, telling me that next to the gospel ministry farming was the noblest profession in life, living near to nature. But to return to the hog, those boiled peas with a liberal admixture of wheat bran for the breeding stock was a balanced ration that in my humble opinion has never been excelled. But the older generation is gone, and with them the boiled peas. Peas are hard to harvest, and this year the price is far above the hog. Beans being so scarce, the pea has to take their place as human food. Next to boiling we tried soaking whole grain, but this did not prove very satisfactory, as much of the grain was undigested. Then came ground provender with the suspicion that when the farmers' grain fell through the hole in the floor of the mill only about half of it came above the ground again, and the old story of the simple boy was much in evidence. The story is this: A miller asked a simple Scotch boy, "Jimmie, dae you ken anything?" "O aye," says Jimmie. "Weel Jimmie, what do you ken?" "I ken the miller has braw pigs," and "Jimmie, what do you ken?" "I dinna ken at wha's expense they are fed."

Then came the day of the farmers doing their own grinding and this forced the mills to grind for so much a bag, and then to keep greedy farmers from bringing peas in salt bags to be ground, the rate was changed to so much per hundredweight, generally six cents. This works well. And now what to feed? Many farmers think if they have the feed it will pay to feed hogs, but would never think of buying hogs and buying feed, forgetting that the grain in their own granary is worth the market price. Others go to the opposite extreme and pay a dollar and a half to two dollars for shorts and low-grade flour, when No. 1 wheat is selling for less money, and last year some were feeding oats worth nearly two cents per pound. The remedy is for farmers to use brains, pad and pencil more, find out what mixture makes a balanced ration, and buy the cheapest if it is not grown at home.

We charge our hogs with home-grown grain at market price, so that we know exactly whether "piggy pays the rint" or not. The money-making feed this year has been corn and shorts, equal parts. So much for the feed, and now how to feed it. In this day of dear labor, throw away your grandfather's yokes and quit carrying pig feed anywhere from twenty to one hundred yards. Either bring the hogs to the feed, or have the feed near the hogs. Often water could be piped into the feed passage into a tank or barrel. We solved this problem by boring a fourteen-inch hole in the clay till we got water close to the pen, as out floors are all cement there is no soakage into the well. For curbing we put a sewer pipe about eight feet long to keep the surface clay from falling in. An iron pump completes the job, and does not cost much. A large box or bin for provender in the feed passage close to the trough, and a man can feed twenty hogs in less time than he could feed two by the old system or want of system.

And now for the trough, we used to use a plank trough in a rather dark pen floored with plank. There were a lot of fat rats running around, but the hogs never seemed satisfied. I took a lantern and investigated, finding a rat-hole cut through floor and trough piping the feed to the rats below. Who says rats don't reason? Next we tried the so-called steel troughs, only to find that they rusted out quickly if not kept in constant use. The ideal trough is cement, as the hogs cannot overturn it nor eat it out. We made ours as follows: The bottom board between pen and feed passage happened to be six inches high, so we set another board parallel with this fourteen inches back in the feed

passage. As the floor was cement we just filled the corners of this box with cement, forming a round-bottomed trough six inches deep and twelve inches wide the whole width of the pen. We just left the box there and placed another six-inch board on edge of trough next the feed passage, making a convenient height on which to rest pail emptying in feed. Then we hinged eighteen inches more of partition to swing up when we want hogs to feed, and fasten down with short board across trough while putting in feed. The upright stays which keep the trough in place keep this swinging front from rising too high, and the trough is thus closed in except the side where hogs feed. This kind of trough has many advantages, hogs can not root out feed, covey can be adjusted any height to keep little pigs from standing in trough, as soon as one feed is done another may be put in trough and kept till wanted, a farmer can feed his hogs without soiling his clothes, or a child of five years' old can feed them, as all he has to do is pull out the little board across trough and hang up the chain. The hogs do the rest. For hogs over two hundred pounds the swinging front would need to be a little higher.

As the bacon hog is our specialty, what follows as to feed applies to him. Our experience has been, the less room a hog has the quicker he grows, and we would like to suggest that some of the experimental farms do some crate fattening of hogs as well as chickens. We want no pasture runs for bacon hogs. Our aim is to sell a bunch of hogs weighing two hundred pounds each every six months, some have done better, but this is a good average. Take the little pigs five or six weeks old, and, if they have not been taught how to feed, throw a little whole wheat in the pen, and put some milk warm from the cow in the trough. After they have learned to eat well, feed skim milk or buttermilk with a little ground wheat or barley or buckwheat, and you will have no crippled pigs.

How often to feed is mostly habit, we like to feed four times till they are about three months old all they will eat clean, then three times, a couple of months longer, and the last month twice if often enough if they are getting heavy feed like corn or peas, with a feed of roots at noon, and also all the hay chaff or clover hay they want. If the milk is scarce a good feed is ground corn and shorts equal parts, a pail of water to a pail of meal mixed in trough. No slop for us any more or dry feed. We used to give drink first and then feed dry meal till we killed some hogs that way, as some pigs will not drink much then gorge themselves with the dry meal, and, as Prof. G. E. Day has pointed out, carry mouthfuls of meal and scatter it as they run to look for something better. The above is for winter feed; for summer some green clover, peas, corn and roots fed in the pen will cheapen the ration.

And now a word about profit, prices and packers. At present prices, nine cents live weight to the farmer, he makes, at present, prices of feed about five cents per hog per day for care, rough feed, as hay, roots, milk, etc., and yet some people think hogs are too high. Farming is the only business I know in which someone else fixes the price of the finished product regardless of the cost.

We have done our share of the cattle trade but have not dealt in hogs, but our opinion is that if the packers don't want their plants idle half the time they will have to plan some measure of co-operation with the farmers, say eight cents the year around, and I think the increased production would keep the price from going higher, as Ontario is particularly suited to produce the best bacon at a fair price. To this they may object that they can not control the export price, but as they already control the quickly-growing home market they could use the export as a slaughter market if necessary.

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J. W. ROSE.

Shorthorn Record of Performance Established.

The Dominion Shorthorn Breeders' Association has virtually completed arrangements for the official inspection and registration of Shorthorn cows and heifers entered for official test. The standards of production entitling to record are practically fixed, but have to be approved before being printed and distributed. They are not high, as it was thought best not to start too high. Any breeder having a registered Shorthorn cow which he wishes to enter for record of performance test, should send the name and number of his cow to W. G. Pettit, Secretary Dominion Shorthorn Breeders' Association. Visits of inspection will be made the same as for other breeds of cattle, so that any animals not entered will be eligible for the record, providing their production equals or exceeds the minimum of milk and butter fat set for mature cows and heifers of different ages.

Founding a Herd.

Whether the breeder commences with grade cattle or pure-breds it is necessary that he exercise good judgment in purchasing the cattle which are to be the foundation breeding stock of the herd. This is more particularly true of pure-breds than grades, because the buyer must study pedigree as well as individuality. In the case of the pure-bred it makes little difference how good the pedigree may be if it is not a good individual it is not good enough for founding a herd, and no matter how typical the conformation may be if the pedigree is questionable in any respect the animal does not fill the bill and should not be placed in the herd.

But given that the animal and pedigree are all that could be desired, what is the best animal to buy? An Old Country contemporary recently recommended yearling heifers because they are usually not over-fat having grown rapidly, have generally never been bred, and so are at least free from abortion. These are points in favor of the yearling which, very often, due to her early age and comparatively low condition and uncertainty as to breeding ability sells at a reasonable price, but there is an uncertainty about even the yearling. She may never breed.

The calf is even a more uncertain proposition. One can scarcely guess her outcome.

The two-year-old heifer bred and showing signs of being safe in calf looks good to most buyers and is a reasonably safe buy, providing she is of the right kind. Abortion and the chance of her being a poor breeder are the only gambles in her case, but a two-year-old heifer not in calf, especially if she be very fat, is not so attractive. Of course, if she has never been bred, there is good chance that she will breed all right, but if she has been served one or more times and has not conceived there is a great chance that she will not be a breeder.

Three-year-olds which have never had a calf are not usually very sure, and the buyer takes a big chance with them, but cows or heifers of this age which have produced a living calf or are carrying a calf, providing all other conditions are satisfactory, are all right.

One of the best of all ages is the young cow which has had two or three calves, breeding regularly every year and producing the right kind of offspring. Bought with calf at foot, or just before parturition, such a cow is an excellent beginning for a herd. Tried and proven right there is no great element of chance in her purchase. The buyer is not buying a "pig in a poke." There are profitable and unprofitable animals in all ages, but the cow which has proven her worth, is a comparatively sure proposition, providing she is not too old. Of course, such often sell for higher prices than younger things, but in the big sales of pure-bred stock, the highest prices are very often paid for young things in very high show-yard condition. In founding a herd the average man should avoid these. They cost too much money for him, and are valuable to established breeders more as an advertisement than for their actual breeding worth. They are bought to win prizes and bring their owner's herd before the public. The man founding a herd has no established herd to advertise, and is in need of breeders rather than show-fitted stock. Do not gather from this that the beginner should not buy good things. He should get the best, but very often the mother of one of these high-priced show-yard propositions, again in calf, or with calf at foot, may be had for one-quarter or one-half the price her highly-fitted heifers bring. What she has done once she should be able to do again, and the fact that she can produce the good ones, and is producing them, should be the dominant factor which should cause the man in search of foundation stock to take her. By all means buy good stock, but good stock does not necessarily mean that it be loaded down with fat. Yearling heifers in good breeding condition, two-year-olds or three year-olds well-gone in calf, or older cows with calves at foot, or safe in calf, are all good propositions for the man in search of female foundation stock, but none are better than the tried and proven cow if she can be bought. Very often it is difficult to get the breeders to part with such animals, but whatever age is bought, always aim to see that the chances of the reproductive organs being injured by over-feed, or by disease, are at a minimum, and never buy cattle which are very much too fat.

"Ready-to-wear" roads are quite justifiably advocated by a correspondent of "The Farmer's Advocate," who says: "Scientific road-making will not stop short of a smooth surface, a finished job, a ready-to-wear road." Many a jaded horse and weary driver, many a farmer and back-aching farmer's wife, will "amen" the proposition to compact stone and gravel roads by other means than narrow vehicle tires.