Pasturing and Soiling Hogs

Wheresoever situated, no farmer is rightly prepared to raise hogs profitably in any considerable numbers, unless well provided with pasture and grass, or facilities for providing acceptable substitutes. In the economical growing of pork there is no more important factor to be considered than that of pasture. Range in pasture affords growing animals the exercise so necessary to health and proper development; and the succulent grasses, while rich in muscle and bone-forming materials, tend to prevent disease and to counteract the heating and fever-imparting properties of corn. This latter quality, and exercise, annually save many thousands of dollars to hog-raisers in the United States, yet the loss that results every day to farmers who do not act upon the fact that the hog is, in his normal condition, a ranging and grass-eating animal, is still enormous. Because the hog is tractable and uncomplaining, his keeper does not realize that an effort to maintain him wholly upon the more concentrated and heating feeds, is as unnatural and unprofitable as it would be to keep horses or cows in the same manner. A further and very important consideration in favor of grass and forage for swine in summer is its small cost, which, as compared with grain-feeding, is merely nominal.

It is well put by Director H. J. Waters of the Missouri experiment station, in bulletin No.79, and with a wide application elsewhere, outside of his state, in his averment that "perhaps the largest single waste occurring on the Missouri farm is that, which comes from the too exclusive use of corn in growing and fattening hogs. The cheapest and most easily applied remedy is a more general use of the proper forage plants in summer and the use of some home-grown protein in winter. It is not, of course, to be denied that the hog is primarily a grain consuming animal, but forage plays an important role in economical hog production and deserves far more attention than it has yet received.

COMPARATIVE VALUE OF PASTURE FOOD

A comparison merely of the nutritive values in the produce of an acre of land in grain or in grass, including the legumes, such as clover, particularly red clover, and alfalfa, serves to show the importance of the grass. If a comparative basis be taken of four pounds of grain or 15 pounds of green clover or alfalfa to make one pound of pork, and the pork is valued at four cents a pound, the following table will show a fair average:

NUTRITIVE MATERIAL PRODUCED ON ONE ACRE OF LAND IN CEREALS OR LEGUMES

Product	Gross Product per acre		Pork per acre	Value at 4 cents per lb.
Wheat	15 bushels or	900 lbs	225 lbs	$9.00
Barley	35 "	1,680	420	16.80
Oats	40 "	1,320	330	13.20
Corn	40 "	2,240	560	22.40
Peas	25 "	1,500	375	15.00
Green Clover	6 tons	12,000	800	32.00
Green Alfalfa	10 "	20,000	1,333	53.32

This estimate of the product of an acre of clover or of alfalfa may be considered rather low (especially for alfalfa), as often a larger yield is obtained in a favorable season. In fact, an experiment at the Oregon station (Bulletin No. 80) in which 12 pigs about three months old were hurdled on good clover from May 2 to August 2, results nearly one-third better were secured. In addition to the clover the pigs were given 317 pounds of shorts (worth $11 a ton), 69 pounds of whole milk (worth 90 cents a hundredweight) and 1,207 pounds of skim milk (worth 15 cents a hundredweight). A gain of 253 pounds was reported, valued at 4½ cents a pound. The pigs utilized 26 square rods of clover. As the gain was worth $11.38 and the supplementary feed (shorts and milk) cost but $4.17, the profit by means of clover pasture was $7.21, from which the deduction was made in the report of the experiment that "it seems that one acre of good clover for growing hogs represents a value of $44.36."

If the foregoing table, compiled by the author from the figures of scientific observers, may be accepted as reliable in practice, it is evident that an acre of alfalfa is worth for growing swine as much as six acres of average wheat, more than four acres of good oats, almost as much as two and two-fifths acres of good corn, and equal in value to one and two-thirds acres of clover.

A mixture crop may be used to good advantage for preliminary pasturage. A sowing of equal parts wheat, oats and barley, mixed, with the addition of two pounds of rape seed to the acre, supplies good spring grazing. "Succotash" is a term applied in recent years to various mixtures sowed together and designed for either forage or soiling. These mixtures admit of considerable range, but usually consist of one or more legumes, one or more smaller cereals, and corn. Experiments in this line have not been extensive enough to determine what mixtures would be standard for special purposes, and at present the term succotash may be applied to any mixture of green crops for livestock feeding.

A succotash crop may be purposely short-lived, and to tide over an emergency, or it may be so calculated as to return two soiling crops, with a moderate grazing between the cuttings. In the former instance it will probably be grazed off closely, and its usefulness ended. When it is some crop that will yield a growth after the first cutting, the mixture should not be of such varieties that the rapid growth of one will smother others of a slower growth.

The Michigan experiment station obtained good results with succotash crops (Bulletin No. 235). It was found that a "succotash mixture, consisting of corn, peas, oats, rape and clover, is an extremely useful combination and that it can be produced as regularly as successfully as any other crop or mixture if properly treated. Though the first attempt was to use this mixture as a forage crop for swine, it has not proved so valuable for that purpose as was expected. When the succotash was grazed off, the losses were heavy from the trampling and wallowing of the animals; in fact, so much so that it had to be hurdled off, giving them access to but a limited area every few days, and this is a somewhat expensive and troublesome method. When cut, hauled, and fed in the hog lots or pens there was little or no loss. When the rape and clover were bitten off close to the ground by hogs, many plants failed to grow again; when cut higher with a scythe they did not fail to grow. The composition of this succotash does not vary greatly from that of green corn in the earlier stages when used for soiling. If succotash is grown to any great extent for soiling purposes, it should be sown at two or three different dates, the first late in April or early in May, the others following at intervals of ten days or two weeks. From the different dates of seeding some one or more of the lots is almost sure to produce a second growth suited for swine pasture.

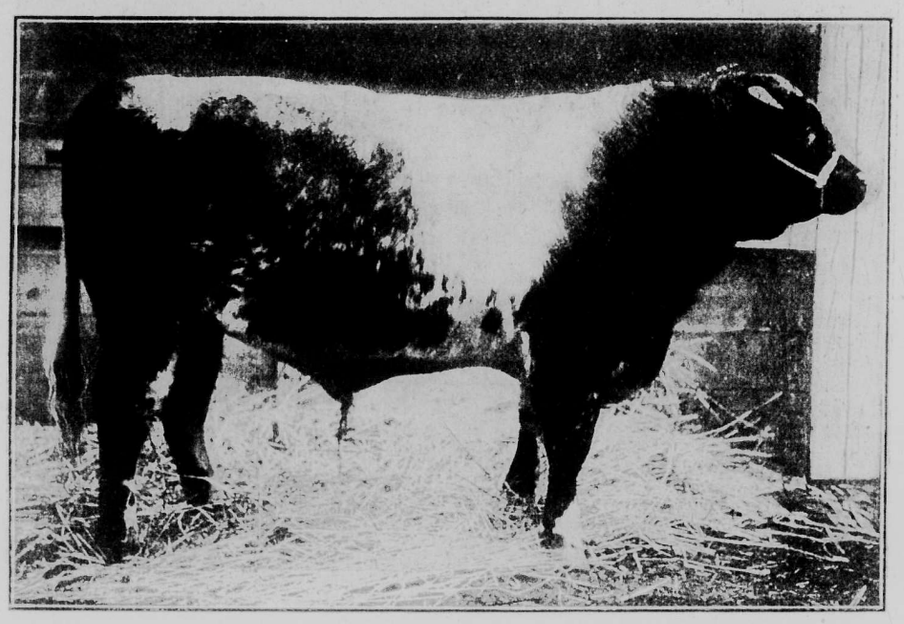
SWINE IN AMERICA.

Weaning Pigs

If the sows have been bred at the proper season, say, from December 1st to January 15th, the weaning time for the spring litters will fall about the season grass is starting, and the young pigs may be taken from the sows, and turned into a grass lot, where there is some shelter in the form of sheds of pens. The sows should be bred with the object in mind of having the young come at a season when they are not likely to be injured by cold or unfavorable weather. The gestation period in sows is 112 days, with rarely more than a days' variation either way. A litter dropped the middle of April is ready to wean the first of June, that is, allowing them six weeks on the sow, which is generally held to be long enough. As soon as the pigs are weaned, run them in a grass plot until other forage crops are ready. If one has two or more litters to wean about the same time, and they vary considerable in size, it is as well to make two lots of them ,grouping according to age.

After weaning, the pigs should be fed carefully. They get along very well if skim milk is available. If not, they will not thrive as well. When skim milk is lacking, feed them a ration of two-thirds middlings and one-third ground oats, which has been soaked between meals. Feed the pigs three or four times a day for a few weeks after they are weaned. Barley scattered on the ground for them to pick up can be fed from the time they are over two or three months old.

The pigs should be castrated before they are weaned, as they recover from the operation more readily at this age than at any other. It is not a good practice to let pigs get over a month old before they are castrated.



OVERSTONE

Yearling Shorthorn Bull; bred by Lord Lorat; Sold for $2730, at the Birmingham Show and Sale, March 4th, 1909

FARM

Letters Upon Farming Operations Welcomed.

Topics for Discussion

To afford an opportunity for the interchange of ideas, and to provide a place where information may be given and received, we will publish each week at the head of this department a list of topics, which our readers are invited to discuss. Opposite each topic is the date of publication of contributions on it and readers are reminded that articles contributed on any of the subjects given, must be in our hands at least ten days earlier than the subject is scheduled for discussion in our columns.

For the best article received on each topic, we will award a first prize of Three Dollars and for the second best Two Dollars, paying the latter sum for other contributions on the subject received and published in the same issue.

Articles should not exceed 500 words in length.

ORDER OF SUBJECTS

April 28.—*Tell how to prepare the land for a crop of roots, either turnips, mangolds or carrots; how the seed is sown, cultivation given and whatever practical suggestions you think necessary.*

May 5.—*What has been your experience in harrowing grain after it is up? Have you adopted it as a fixed practise? Tell why you do it and give what you consider practical hints.*

May 12.—*What method do you follow in caring for cream intended for delivery to a cream gathering creamery?*

May 19.—*Which pays the average farmer best, to stable feed and fatten his steers in winter, to feed them outside in yards or in the scrub, on hay or straw and grain, or to sell them as stockers? Some farmers may think that none of these three methods of handling, offer profit making possibilities so they are invited to explain their own system of turning profit out of the cattle they rear each year. Just now while the experiences of a season's operations are fresh in the mind is a good time for the discussion of such questions as this.*

* * *

Foals are coming plentifully in Sunny Alberta.

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Trade in stallions was brisk at Calgary. Lane was sold out of Percherons, Turner sold five Clydesdales, and Jaques five Suffolks.

These were show horses of their respective breeds,and none of them commanded up to $2000, yet their are lots of horses sold for more than this figure to syndicates through the country. Here is one way to keep money on the farm.

* * *

Calgary offers an excellent market now for moderate priced harness horses. The sheriff bought a carriage pair for the show and there are a lot of people who are not willing that the Van Wort's shall have the only distinctively carriage pair in Alberta.

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It is doubtful if there was ever a better class of standard-bred stallions' line up in Canada than that which faced judge Black at Calgary.

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EDITOR FARMER'S ADVO

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