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Book Dept., The 'Grain Growers' Guide, Winnipeg

## Steer Feeding at Lacombe

### Results of Winter Feeding Steers at Lacombe Experimental Farm

The Dominion Experimental Station at Lacombe concluded on February 8 this year an experiment which was commenced last November with the object of comparing the results of winter feeding similar groups of cattle when fed under different conditions. The cattle were divided into three lots and were cut at the beginning into groups as nearly equal in point of breeding, age and conformation as was possible. One group was fed in the barn in boxes loose, another in a corral without shelter except a straw stack and with a very limited run and a third was fed in the brush with free run having the brush and straw stack for shelter. The group fed in the barn had access to water at all times, the group fed in the corral was watered in a large tank which was kept open practically all the time by the use of a tank heater. The group in the brush were watered thru the ice at a water hole in a small lake. A similar experiment last year gave results showing cost of gain less in the group fed in the corral than those under other conditions and this year's results are somewhat contradictory, the group fed inside showing cheapest gains. It is certain that the group fed inside would show heavier shipping shrinkage than either of those fed under outside conditions. The inside group this year had the advantage over those fed inside a year ago, in that water had been put into the barns this season and the inside steers were able to drink at will while those inside a year ago were watered twice daily.

### Feed and Prices

The average cost of one pound of gain is less for the three groups than the cost of gain in any year since 1909-10. Since the price charged for feed is higher for this test than that of 1909-10, it is safe to say that the cost of gain this year as compared with the cost of feed is less than for any season since feeding trials began. Green feed (peas and oats cut green and cured as hay) is charged against the cattle at \$10 per ton and since 119 tons were cut from 35 acres, it is evident that this crop is a paying one when sold at \$10 per ton. A mixture of oats, barley and wheat made up of about two-fifths oats, two-fifths barley and one-fifth

wheat constituted the grain ration which is charged at one cent per pound ground. A small charge is made to cover cost of bedding. The selling price is only slightly in advance of the purchase price and considering this fact in conjunction with the fact that feed consumed by the cattle has been well sold, it is somewhat remarkable that even a small profit can be shown. These results are further evidence of the value of livestock as a medium for the transformation of the sunshine of summer in the form of grain and fodder into cold, hard cash. It is commonly believed to be a difficult matter to transform products such as low grade grain and fodder crops into profits at the present time, but this feat appears easy for a bunch of steers.

### Inside Group's Advantage

While the results this season indicate an advantage in favor of inside feeding, it is well to remember that those fed outside without shelter made good gains. The fact that a prospective feeder does not feel able to erect shelter should not deter him from undertaking feeding cattle. It should also be pointed out that a charge of \$4 per head might be made against the cattle fed in the barn to cover interest on the investment and that three groups of steers would require to be put in the barn in the course of a year to fully cover such interest charge. It is, therefore, doubtful as to whether it would be possible to pay interest on such shelter by feeding cattle even with the same advantage secured in each test as in this trial since it would scarcely be practical at the present time to buy and turn off three groups per annum. Another advantage enjoyed by the inside group this year consisted in the fact that they were protected from the cold weather permitting good gains, even in the extreme cold. The cattle were sold before warm weather made more rapid gains possible in the outside groups. All steers were dehorned in October some time before grain ration was commenced, but after danger from flies was past. The dehorning did not appear to interfere to any great extent with the gains made.

The following figures give the results in detail:

	Brush	Corral	Barn	Total
Number of steers in lot	8	11	8	27
First weight November 16	9480	13484	9056	32020
First weight average	1185	1226	1132	1181
Finished weight, February 9	10635	14941	10865	36461
Finished weight, average	1332	1358	1359	1350
Total gain in 85 days	1175	1457	1809	
Average gain per steer	147	132	227	169
Average daily gain per steer	1.73	1.55	2.67	1.99
Average daily gain per lot	13.84	17.05	21.36	52.25
Total cost of feed	\$111.22	\$152.71	\$111.16	\$375.09
Cost of 100 lbs. gain	9.47	10.48	6.15	8.70
Selling price, \$7.15 per cwt., less 5% shrinkage	723.72	1014.87	738.02	2476.61
Profit on lot	10.78	24.55	31.42	9.97
Profit per steer	1.34	2.23	3.93	3.7
Average value of steer at start	77.91	80.61	74.43	77.65
Average selling price per steer	90.46	92.25	92.00	91.57
Amount of meal eaten, lbs.	5902	5129	5902	20133
Amount of green feed eaten, lbs.	9100	12540	9100	30780
Amount of straw eaten, lbs.	11856	16302	11842	40000
Amount of salt eaten, lbs.	54	54	50	158
Average increase in value	\$12.55	\$11.64	\$17.57	\$13.92
Average cost of feed per steer	\$13.90	\$13.88	\$13.89	\$13.89

The above table is valuable at this time not only as showing the result of this experiment, but also since it may serve as a guide to farmers who intend feeding cattle during the coming winter, by following which it may be definitely determined whether the gains put on are profitable or not. Too many of the methods on the ordinary farms are slipshod and very few men really know just how much it costs to produce any commodity which is for sale. Usually if a beast sells for more in the spring than was paid for it in the previous fall, it is taken for granted that a profit was made, but just how valuable the labor

and feed was which were necessary to produce this additional price is not known. The trouble is generally that no complete system is available whereby such an account can be accurately kept. By filling in the above table, however, with figures for his own particular stock, a complete record can be kept on almost any farm with but little trouble and next spring it can be definitely determined whether or not the steer feeding was profitable.

The perfect civilized man is not only a sound strong body, but a very elaborate fabric of mind.—H. G. Wells.

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