

### Co-Operative Pork Packing

A subscriber in western Ontario asks for information regarding the cost of erecting and operating a co-operative pork factory, and whether it would be advisable to erect one in his locality. It is very difficult to give definite estimates as to the cost of buildings, etc., and the amount of capital required to successfully operate one. To start on a scale that would allow for growth and expansion, would require at least from \$25,000 to \$50,000 for plant and equipment, and then it would be safe to have a working capital of several thousand dollars in addition. We know of one or two instances in the eastern provinces where a pork factory was started on a capital of \$10,000 for building and equipment, but we think this is too small, and only admits of a very small business being done. We would advise all parties contemplating erecting pork packing factories, whether they are co-operative or not, to visit some of the establishments already in operation. Such a visit would enable them to understand the nature of the business and the magnitude of the undertaking.

As to the advisability of erecting co-operative pork factories there is some difference of opinion. One very important advantage which the co-operative packing establishment has over the large establishment in the big centres is that if properly managed it would be able to control to a large extent the kind of hogs produced by the farmer. A co-operative factory drawing its supply from a district within a comparatively few miles distant would be able to educate the farmers in that section as to the kind of hog to raise and how to feed it so as to make it produce the finest quality of Wiltshire bacon. This, the packer in the large centres who is separated a long distance from where he gets his supply can do only in a general way. But a co-operative factory with the stock held largely by farmers in the district would have a great advantage in being able to come directly in touch with every hog producer in the locality.

But it is well to consider the question from every point of view, whether a co-operative or any other kind of pork-packing establishment is contemplated, it is absolutely necessary that some skilled expert should be secured who thoroughly understands the selection and killing process, and the making and curing of bacon suited to the export trade. The erection of buildings and the management of the whole concern should be placed under the control of such an individual, who, as is the case with skilled labor, will have to be paid a good salary for his services. Where large capital is invested, such as would be required to operate a pork-packing establishment some person or persons of more than the average business ability should be connected with the concern to overlook its finances. There are no doubt farmers in every districts quite capable of looking after this part of the business if they would give their time to it. To finance well requires special training and careful attention, and unless that could be given care should be exercised in investing large capital. The buying and selling is also an important part of such a business, and unless the markets are closely followed, and the quality of the best, failure is likely to result.

As far as we are able to judge we do not think there would be much difficulty in disposing of the product in Great Britain so long as the quality was right, and the very best Wiltshire sides were exported. But then the supply must be regular, and when a customer is secured the factory must be in a position to send forward a certain quantity every week or fortnight, as the case may be. And just here, for a time at least, will be one of the great difficulties in successfully carrying on a pork-packing establishment where the supply of hogs is to be drawn from a certain limited district. A factory that has a killing capacity of 1,000 hogs a week is not considered very large, and this would require a capital of about \$50,000 for buildings and equipment. But we are very doubtful at the present time if there is one single county in Ontario in a position to supply every week (1,000 hogs) for a year. Double this number each week, however, is not beyond the capacity of

every county if the farmers make a regular business of it; but this will take a year or two to bring about. Of course, in a district where a packing establishment were erected, the supply of hogs would quickly increase, and it would only be necessary to wait a year or two, if conditions were favorable, till a sufficient quantity of hogs could be secured.

Recent experiments conducted at Guelph, an account of which is given elsewhere, show that whey and skim-milk, combined with other feeds, make a good, firm quality of bacon. This being so, pork-packing and dairying should go hand in hand. Where both winter and summer dairying are made a specialty of it should not be difficult, to get a sufficient supply of hogs in a comparatively small area to keep a good-sized packing establishment going. Ten or a dozen good cheese factories or creameries in close proximity, as is the case in Oxford or Perth counties, if running all the year around, making cheese during the summer and butter during the winter, or butter both winter and summer, could supply a good share of the food necessary to raise sufficient hogs to make a pork-packing establishment in the locality a success.

Co-operation, however, may be made useful to the farmer who raises hogs without investing money in a co-operative packing establishment. Co-operative selling of their supply of hogs would help farmers to get better value for their products. The plan would be for the farmers in a locality to co-operate and ship their hogs direct to the packer and do away with the middleman. If, say, twenty farmers would co-operate in this way, an ear-tag with the farmer's name or a number on could be provided and fastened to each lot of hogs. When the hogs arrived at the packer's each farmer could be paid what his hogs were worth. In this way the quality of the hog would count, as it does not where a middleman buys any and every kind at the same price. We would like to see this plan tried, as we believe it would be of great educational value and enable every farmer to get better value for his hogs than the present plan affords.

### South American Competition in the Cattle Trade

In another column a correspondent points out that the reason why Canadians are not able to compete with the people of Argentina in grain-growing and the export cattle trade may be due to the different monetary systems in vogue in the two countries. Argentina has a silver currency, while Canada has a gold currency. While this is true, we are at a loss to understand just how such a condition of affairs would enable the one country to produce beef cheaper than the other. The export cattle trade of Argentina is with Great Britain, where a gold standard of currency prevails, and all cattle or any other product shipped there would have to be sold on the gold basis, or, in other words, for the value of the animal or product in English currency when it is landed. This being so, it would not make any difference what kind of a currency was in vogue in Argentina, the price paid in England being governed altogether by the supply and demand.

The cost of producing beef or any other farm products depends nearly altogether upon the cheapness of the land and its ability to produce an abundance of cheap food. Argentina seems to be specially favored in this particular. There are large runs where cattle can graze all the year round at very little cost. Besides this, corn and other fodders can be produced at a very low cost, so that the expense of producing good beef is very much reduced. The general plan followed by feeders there is to allow the cattle to graze till within a few months of the time when they should be ready for export. They are then placed in stables and fed a ration made up largely of corn; silos being in use in many parts of the country. It will thus be readily seen that the South American feeder has a great advantage over his brother feeder on the northern half of this continent.