

Steers Proved Profitable.

H. A. Craig, writing in "The Farmer's Advocate and Home Journal," Winnipeg, Man., outlining the results of steer-feeding experiments in Alberta, is able to show a fair profit on the operations, even though prices were high last fall and not as high as expected this spring. Mr. Craig says:

During the season of 1912-13 there were 397 steers fed on four of the Demonstration Farms of the Province of Alberta at Vermilion, Olds, Claresholm and Sedgewick. All these cattle were range-bred steers from two to four years old. They were put into an enclosure about November 1st, and fed on an average five and a half months. The enclosure in each case covered an area of about one and a half acres and was protected on three sides by a tight board fence; eight feet high, besides this the horse and cattle barns afforded some shelter. The yards are fitted up with racks and tables, to feed both long and cut feed. The long feed was fed in racks attached to the board fence forming a V with the fence and made of 2 by 4-inch material placed about five and a half inches apart, similar to the feeding racks in railway stock yards. The cut feed and chop was fed in tables placed in the middle of the yard. These tables are about four feet wide with a two by eight-inch on each side, and a two by four-inch scantling on top of the two by eight-inch stuff forming a lip. This prevents the cattle wasting the feed.

On all the farms the cattle were fed cut green oat sheaves and chop twice a day, and at Sedgewick and Vermilion hay was fed for a portion of the time; at Olds the racks were kept filled with hay during the whole feeding period, and at Claresholm no hay was fed. Feeding chop was commenced by giving about four pounds per head at the beginning of the year. This was increased as fast as the animals would stand it, until they were on full ration of about 14 pounds per head. The chop consisted of two-thirds oats and one-third barley, though some wheat was supplied in place of the barley. This chop was coarsely ground and mixed with the cut feed. Plenty of salt and heated water were kept before them all the time.

The conditions under which the cattle were weighed in and weighed out at the different farms vary very greatly. The Claresholm and Olds cattle were bought at Grassy Lake and weighed full off the range before shipping. Both of these bunches of cattle were weighed at the C. P. R. stock yards at Claresholm and Olds respectively when sold. The Vermilion cattle were weighed in on the Vermilion stock yards full off the range, and in selling were weighed off cars Swift Canadian Co.'s Packing Plant, Edmonton. The Sedgewick cattle were bought at Camrose, and weighed full on the C. P. R. stock-yards scales before shipping. They were sold weighed over the farm scales with a five per cent. shrink. The Vermilion cattle were twenty hours on the cars, about twenty-two hours out of the feeding yard, before being weighed. They were weighed at the farm two weeks before shipping and averaged 1,473 pounds. At the packing plant they averaged 1,375. Allowing for 15 pounds gain in two weeks the shrink would be 115 pounds. Before comparing the net gain in weight per steer at the different farms the conditions under which the various cattle were weighed in and weighed out must be taken into consideration, so that a fair comparison can be made.

On the whole the steer-feeding work this year has proven very satisfactory. The price was high when the steers were brought in, and the prices in the spring were not quite as high as anticipated, owing to the fact, that a lot of Eastern beef was shipped on to the Western market. However, even with the small margin between the cost price and selling price, the gross profit of the feeding of 397 steers was \$13,091.10. Market price is charged for feed when grown on the farms. The greater part of the feed was grown on the various farms.

No account has been taken of the manure, and it would perhaps be fair to credit the steers with this, as the manure is all being applied to the land.

Our experience this year has taught us, first, cattle will not only put on greater gains, but will do it more economically if bought close to the feeding place, and driven in rather than buying at a distance and shipping by train. The journey seems to excite the animals and prevents them from making good gains in the early part of the feeding period.

Second. We are convinced it pays to cut all the green sheaves, and if hay can be secured at moderate cost it will pay to keep the racks full of hay during the whole of the feeding period.

Third. It is important in feeding a bunch of 100 steers that the steers which are not doing well after one month's feeding be cut out and sold to the butcher at market prices. In every bunch fed during the last two years at the Demonstration Farms we have found that there

are from two to five steers which do not pay to feed until spring. In one case this year a steer weighed in at 1,155 on November 1st, and on April 21st weighed out at 800 pounds.

A full statement of the results shows that 104 steers weighed in at Vermilion at 129,460 lbs., and gained in weight 12,990 lbs., including two which died and two which are kept over. The increase in weight was 128 lbs. per steer. These steers were bought at 5½ cents per pound or \$6,796.65; this with \$307.31 interest on the note, and \$1,493.00 for feed including everything and \$407.45 for labor, brought the total cost up to \$9,005.61. The steers brought 7½ cents when sold, and together with the increase in hogs following brought \$10,826.19, or a net gain of \$1,820.58; a net gain per head of \$17.50, and a gross gain of \$38.74 per head.

At the Sedgewick farm 106 steers gained 21,109 lbs. These steers cost, including freight, interest, feed and labor \$9,565.81, and sold for \$10,053.88; leaving a net profit of \$488.07 or \$4.60 per head, and a gross profit of \$29.36 per head.

At Olds 105 steers gained 163 lbs. each in weight, cost, everything included, \$10,890.63, and realized at 7½ cents per pound \$11,856.75; leaving a net gain of \$966.12 or \$9.20 per head, and a gross profit of \$36.83 per head.

At Claresholm 82 steers gained 14,710 lbs. cost \$8,332.16, and realized \$9,244.97. A total net gain, all expenses being charged, of \$912.81 or \$11.13 per head, or a gross profit of \$37.20 per head.

Cattle in Ontario were put in at from \$5.50 to over \$6.00 per cwt., and sold out, in most cases, at a little less than \$7.00, although a few extra choice cattle made as high as \$7.32 or \$7.35. If profit is to be made a reasonable margin of spread is necessary, but these experi-

feeding stations, with the exception of the bunch making the largest net profits, fair prices were paid and they brought no more than is being paid for well-finished steers on any of the Western markets.

"It is well also to look at the gross profits of \$29.36 to \$38.77. On the farm the figures for labor, pasture and feed could be cut in half, especially where not more than a carload is fed during the winter on any one farm, and it would be safe to say that the net profit for the farmer would, in every case, be very much nearer the gross profit than was the case in the experiments, not because he would be more economical but the items, labor and feed would cost him much less than they are figured at in the reports of the feeding experiments."

A Sample Steer.

The accompanying illustration is a snapshot of a representative sample 1720-lb fat steer in a carload of 20 head, averaging over 1500 lbs. each after more than 100-mile railway trip, sold recently at the Union Stock Yards, West Toronto Junction, for J. P. Beattie, their feeder, of Middlesex Co., Ontario, by Maybee and Wilson to the Harris Abattoir people at \$7.32½ per cwt. By frequenters of this growing cattle mart the bunch was reckoned the choicest that had made its appearance there this season. They were ripe and prime, and a credit to any fed lot.

Over-Fitting and Breeding.

Breeders who have had experience in fitting breeding stock year after year for the larger shows know how difficult it is to put the best bloom on the animals, and still not injure their breeding ability.

The very high feeding, often overfeeding, necessary to put on the extra finishing touches, is not usually, in the best interests of their procreative powers. Not so very long ago the writer visited a fine show herd, and the owner of that herd pointed out a very fine show cow saying, "I had to let her down in flesh, as in high fit she produced no calves."

On this question a writer in "The Farmer and Stock Breeder" throws out some valuable hints. He says that "probably few will be inclined to dispute the contention that very high feeding, being an entirely unnatural system, is prejudicial to the procreative instinct and that many herds, ably managed, have supplied examples of this. An un-

natural, obese condition tends also to produce patchy flesh, which, in the course of time, may become a defect unless the breeder is very careful with the system of management employed, and in the selection and mating of his stock. Then, again, we have the equally wide problem whether or not it is advisable to show young stock—whether, in fact, the advantages which are apparent are not outweighed by the damage which is done during the infantile period. It is probably correct to say that one-half of the young stock exhibited in high condition are spoiled in their youth. So keenly do some breeders feel upon the subject that they refuse to exhibit young stock, and discussions which have taken place from time to time clearly bring out the fact that breeders are more or less slaves to the system which has, in a financial sense, something to recommend it, but as a matter of policy it is questionable whether the game is worth the candle.

To some extent the evils have been mitigated by a more correct interpretation and delineation of high feeding as distinct from overfeeding. Of late years there has been less overfeeding seen in the showyard than was at one time common. The evil may have cured itself partly, but it is



Typical Steer.

One of a lot of twenty head, about the best sold on Toronto market this season. The lot brought \$7.32½ per cwt.

ments in the West, with all expenses, freight, interest, labor and feed of all kinds charged against the steers, showed a very nice profit besides the manure.

It must be noted that no value was placed on the manure. This would increase the net profit considerably. Good wages were charged against the cattle in every case, and the profits shown are surely encouraging. The steers were bought in at \$5.25, \$5.75, \$5.70 and \$5.70 per cwt., respectively, and all were sold at \$7.50 per cwt. The smallest spread in price was \$1.75 per cwt., two being \$1.80 and one \$2.25. The largest net gains were made in this latter case. Eastern feeders the past year were not privileged to enjoy so much spread in price.

The editor of our Western contemporary commenting on the results says:

"The results of the steer-feeding experiments, carried on at four of Alberta's demonstration farms, are arguments strongly in favor of finishing feeder steers. The net profit per steer, varying from \$4.50 to \$17.50, makes very satisfactory net returns when one considered that every item in the feeding experiment was billed against the steers in hard cash. Moreover, these steers were bought at considerable distances from the