

# The Farming World

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## The Beef Cattle Trade

Practical Pointers for Canadian Farmers



PRICES for beef cattle on Toronto market just now are higher than they have been for some time. The cause of this advance is claimed by dealers to be largely of local character, and present high values are not at all permanent. To a representative of The Farming World, Mr. Wm. Harris, of the Harris Abattoir Co., Toronto, who has just returned from Great Britain, stated that the prices paid on Toronto market during the past few weeks were too high to admit of cattle being exported at a profit. While the outlook in the old land is generally speaking good, there is nothing to warrant any great advance in prices for beef cattle on this side. There is no doubt a scarcity in local supplies just now, and in addition Mr. Harris' Company have been taking from 600 to 700 head of cattle per week off the market. This has created a local flurry and caused buyers to advance values considerably. The higher prices will no doubt bring out larger supplies, which will have a tendency to moderate values.

Mr. Harris believes that the coming method of disposing of the beef cattle of this country is through the dressed meat trade. His firm is now sending forward from one hundred and fifty to two hundred carcasses a week. So far the returns have been as satisfactory as one could expect in starting a new industry of this kind. The shipments have arrived in the old land in good condition, and appear to suit the trade there well. All that is required to put this trade on a good footing is to conduct it after the most improved plan and to secure the right quality of cattle. With these two requisites there is a big future for the farmers of this country in the shipping of chilled or dressed beef to England.

A serious drawback, however, is the discrimination in freight rates against the Canadian producer. The dressed meat trade of Chicago and the Western States has assumed very large proportions of late years, and both the railways and the steamship companies cater to this trade as much as possible in the way of cheap freight rates. Mr. Harris stated that our Canadian railways charged nearly twice as much for a car load of dressed beef from Toronto to the seaboard, as from Chicago. In fact, car loads of dressed meat pass through Toronto every day on the G.T.R. and C.P.R. from Chicago at about one-half the through rate that would have to be paid from here. This is discrimination with a vengeance, and is certainly a serious hindrance to the establishment of this new industry in Canada. It would seem

that our railways are standing in their own light by a discrimination of this kind. If they would lend every encouragement to the new industry by granting as low a rate from Toronto as from Chicago they would be promoting a distinctly Canadian trade, in which they would not have the competition of the American roads in conveying the product to the seaboard.

In developing either the live cattle or dressed beef trades farmers have a great deal yet to learn. The day of the big, fat four-year-old steer has gone by. He is not wanted for the export trade, nor for the local trade, either. The kind best suited to the English trade at the present time is the well bred and well fed animal, brought to maturity at from one and a half to two and a half years old. It suits the trade best both at home and abroad, and farmers should govern themselves accordingly. We were shown a carcass of beef by Mr. Harris which he claimed was rather too good for the local trade, but just suited to the English trade. This was not a large or extremely fat carcass, but just medium in these particulars. It weighed a little over 600 lbs. Carcasses of this weight, or say from 500 to 600 lbs. net, from young matured animals, are the kind the English consumer wants. Canadian carcasses of this quality command from 10c. to 12c. per lb. by the carcass in England, and are sold in the retail shops at from 15c. to 16c.

To produce this quality the farmer must aim to raise and feed animals that will mature at about two years of age. This can be done quite readily if gone about in the proper way. While there is a very great deal in the breed, there is also very much in the individual animal. Thrifty, well bred calves, well fed from the time they are dropped till they are sold are what is wanted. No animal can be brought to maturity at two years that is neglected when a calf as the majority of the cattle fed in this country are. And here, in our opinion is the weakest point in our system. Farmers stunt their calves the first year and check rapid growth just at a time when the most profitable feeding can be done. With fairly well bred and thrifty animals fed so as to grow rapidly from the beginning to the end, the production of this early matured or baby beef can be accomplished without any difficulty and with greater profit than in feeding animals which mature at from three to four years old. Experiments conducted at the Experimental Farm, Ottawa, and noted in these columns a few weeks back, show that steers matured at two year old made a profit of \$2 per head over those matured at three years, and from \$8 to \$9 over those matured at four years. It is clear, then, that by maturing his beef animals earlier the farmer is able, not only to supply the quality best suited to the English