

vily to market them when they were six months old.

We must say it is a surprise to find that his pigs will not eat the rape. It may be that they prefer the wheat when given their choice, but that if compelled to they would eat the rape readily and do well on it. (1) We are also satisfied that an acre of rape will keep at least three times as many hogs as an acre of wheat will.

N. West Farmer.

SOFT BACON.

Notes from Professor Day on some Experiments at the Ontario Agricultural College, Guelph.

To the Editor of *Farming*:

SIR,—As Canadian packers have recently had a great deal of trouble with what is known as "soft bacon," perhaps a few notes on the subject may prove of interest to the many farmers who read your valuable paper. One of our leading packing houses makes the statement that, during the months of May, June, and a part of July of the present year, the number of soft sides ranged from 20 to 40 per cent of the whole. This means that Canada placed upon the English market this year a large quantity of inferior bacon; and though this bacon was not misrepresented, but was sold strictly upon its merits, at the same time it was Canadian bacon, and tended to bring discredit upon Canadian bacon as a whole. It requires no argument to convince any intelligent man that the condition of affairs just described means an ultimate loss to the farmer, because, when our packers meet with losses of this kind, their only remedy is to pay lower prices. It is therefore a matter of great importance, not only to the packer, but more especially to the farmer, that less soft bacon should be placed upon the market; and the problem of how to produce firm bacon should be carefully studied by every man who has a pig to sell.

Soft bacon does not mean fat bacon. It means a soft condition of the fat, which develops while the bacon is in the salt, and reduces the value of a side according to its degree. An absolutely soft side is comparatively worthless, and between this

condition and firmness there are all shades and degrees of tenderness. Sometimes softness is noticeable before the bacon is put into the salt, but apparently firm sides frequently come out of the salt decidedly tender and soft.

Various speculations have been indulged in regarding the cause of softness. Corn, clover and lack of exercise are perhaps the chief things which have been blamed, but there is considerable diversity of opinion regarding the matter. For some months past, experiments have been in progress at the Ontario Agricultural College to ascertain, if possible, some of the causes of softness, and to study methods of producing firm bacon. In these experiments the hogs are shipped directly to the factory, slaughtered, and the different groups packed separately in salt. When the bacon comes out of the salt it is carefully examined by experts, so that there can be no mistake as to its firmness or softness. Our investigations are by no means complete, but some interesting results have been obtained. Full details of the experiments will be found in the College Report of 1898; but the following are some of the principal points brought out by the work up to date:

1. Though corn has been commonly blamed for producing soft bacon, it apparently has no evil effects when used for finishing hogs that have had plenty of exercise until they reach 100 pounds' live weight.
2. Neither does corn appear to cause softness when used for finishing hogs that have had no exercise, but have been fed skim-milk with a mixed grain ration until they reach 100 pounds' live weight.
3. What has been said of corn may also apply to rape, (1) when a two-thirds meal ration is fed with it.
4. Hogs confined in pens and fed wheat middlings during their early growth, and peas, barley and shorts during the finishing period (without either skim-milk or whey), have a marked tendency to softness of fat.
5. Hogs given plenty of exercise, and fed as just described, produce firmer bacon than those confined in pens and fed the same ration.
6. The evil effects arising from lack of exercise can be overcome by the judicious feeding of whey or skim-milk with the meal ration. From two to

(1) Of course they would. Will not they eat cabbages?
Ed.

(1) And yet, Mr. Day finds that hogs will not eat rape!
Ed.