

FOOD COMMODITIES IN CANADA

Amount in Storage—Increase in Quantity of Butter, Eggs, Pork, Mutton, Lamb and Fish

Reports from the cold storage companies for June 1st, according to the Cost of Living Branch of the Department of Labor, indicate an increase in quantity in store of butter, eggs, pork, mutton, lamb and fish; and a decrease in the quantity of cheese, beef and fowl, compared with May 1st of this year.

As compared with June 1st, 1917, there is more butter, beef and fish stored. Cheese, eggs, pork products and fowl have decreased compared with last year. The most striking comparison is in the case of beef, of which there is 111.72 per cent. more than on June 1st, 1917. Since the Purchasing Commission of the Allies is fully aware of this fact, and the statement of these gentlemen to the effect that a large proportion of this stock is already under contract to them, is in the hands of the department, no grounds for any charge of hoarding can be found.

The most striking feature recently in the market situation of storage products has been the great rise in the price of beef. There has been a general rise in all beef products throughout the Dominion, but the West, starting from Port Arthur and Fort William, has suffered the worst. Naturally, the consuming public has resented the rise very much.

Increase in Meat Prices.

The matter has been carefully investigated with the view to detecting profiteering, and while the merchants in some localities have apparently used the general rise in prices to cover an undue increase, evidence that the general increase throughout the country was due to unlawful action on the part of the meat packers, has not been found. The increase is general throughout the whole of North America, and is fully as marked in the case of live cattle as in the case of meat. The increased price is due entirely to the war situation; particularly to the fact that the purchasers of the United States army and the purchasing commission of the other allies, have considered that the increased price to the farmer

was necessary to stimulate the production of more beef on the farm. The necessity arose on the demands of shipping facilities to place the United States army in France, with the consequent lack of ships to bring as much meat as formerly from South America.

Reason for Increases.

The necessity has arisen for North America to provide a larger proportion of beef, and it was not thought possible to do this at the former price. The increase was given more to stimulate production in the future than to hasten selling in the present. The result has been that the price of live cattle went up in all markets several cents, and that the wholesale price of the best meat by the carcass rose accordingly. It is impossible to make an exact statement for the country as a whole, but the evidence available indicates that the rise was most evident in the price of live animals and in the retail price. Apparently, if any of the dealers have taken advantage of the situation to raise the price unduly, it is the retailers.

This is probably due, in part at least, to the fact that the wholesalers have large stocks on hand, on which they are not allowed by the Canada Food Board to advance their prices. It is now unlawful for wholesale dealers to make more than a certain limited percentage of profit on meats, no matter what change may come over the market. It is noteworthy that wholesale prices of beef have advanced very much more in the United States than they have in Canada. In the United States the increased cost of the carcass has been taken up mostly by added charges for the cheaper cuts with consequent added burdens upon the labor classes. The evidence shows that such was not the case in general in Canada, but that the best cuts were advanced as much as the common cuts.

Food Commodities in Storage.

The amount of food commodities in storage June 1st, were:—

	Lbs.
Butter	2,251,674
Cheese	2,966,997
Eggs (dozen)	8,422,588
Beef (fresh and pickled)	19,333,470
Pork (fresh and pickled)	31,218,944
Bacon, ham and smoked meats ..	14,721,221
Mutton and lamb	1,507,824
Fish (all varieties)	16,154,305
Fowl (all varieties)	904,075

The preceding figures cover only goods reported as held in storage. To estimate the quantity of any such goods available from cold storage companies for consumption and export, 10 per cent. may be added to represent goods in transit and certain comparatively insignificant quantities unreported.

Owned by Firms.

Goods owned by firms reporting June 1st, 1917, show the following comparisons:—

	June 1, 1917.	June 1, 1918.	Inc. or dec.
	Lbs.	Lbs.	%
Butter	1,469,781	1,689,260	+ 14.93
Cheese	3,102,210	2,190,098	— 29.41
Eggs (dozen)	6,568,873	5,911,113	— 10.02
Beef (fresh and pickled)	8,125,422	17,203,918	+ 111.72
Pork (fresh and pickled) ..	31,829,362	29,458,903	— 7.45
Bacon, ham and smoked meats	18,557,089	13,113,987	— 29.35
Mutton and lamb	1,466,731	679,596	— 53.67
Fish (all varieties)	8,857,154	9,264,535	+ 4.61
Fowl (all varieties)	3,542,344	770,072	— 78.27

Comparison of Holdings.

The following is a statement of comparison of holdings of May 1st, 1918, with June 1st, 1918:—

	May 1.	June 1.	Inc. or dec.
	Lbs.	Lbs.	%
Butter	1,182,211	2,251,673	+ 90.46
Cheese	3,141,771	2,966,997	— 5.55
Eggs (dozen)	3,766,997	8,422,588	+ 123.58
Beef (fresh and pickled) ..	21,592,408	19,333,470	— 10.47
Pork (fresh and pickled) ..	27,235,400	31,218,944	+ 14.62
Bacon, ham and smoked meats	13,279,961	14,721,221	+ 10.85
Mutton and lamb	1,449,655	1,507,824	+ 4.01
Fish (all varieties)	15,534,328	16,154,305	+ 3.99
Fowl (all varieties)	1,640,150	904,075	— 44.88

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