

Carcass Better, Gains Slower With Alfalfa Hay For Pigs

Carcass quality of hogs can be improved by feeding alfalfa as well as by maintaining higher protein levels in finishing rations, USDA scientists report. But they find more time and feed are needed to produce a market hog when extra alfalfa is used.

In a series of experiments the rations of swine weighing 100, 125, and 150 pounds and the effects of reducing protein levels during finishing in feedlots. Carcass backfat, bacon thickness, and the percent-

age of total fat were significantly reduced by feeding extra alfalfa to hogs of all weights tested.

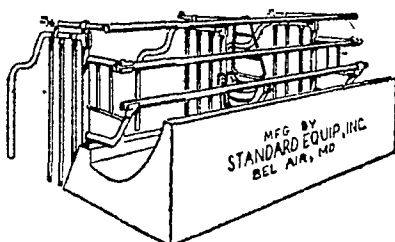
Progressive decreases in rate of gain and feed use efficiency took place at all weights, however, where the alfalfa content of the diet was increased from 4 to 16 or 28 per cent. Rate of gain dropped from 1.65 pounds per day with 4 per cent alfalfa to 1.55 and 1.40 pounds per day as the alfalfa content increased.

of 100 and 125 pounds live weight, it took more feed (4.12 pounds compared with 4.22 and 4.59 pounds) to produce a pound of gain as the alfalfa content rose. Adding extra alfalfa in the diet of the 150-pound hogs improved carcass grade and increased carcass length but produced only slight effects on rate of gain and feed efficiency.

Protein level, in the other experiment, caused no

changes in rate of gain or feed efficiency. The higher protein level did reduce the percentage of carcass fat and increased the percentage of preferred cuts of meat. In this test, the protein level of one lot of pigs was reduced from 18 to 15 per cent when the pigs reached 125 pounds, and another group of hogs had the protein level of their diet reduced from 14 to 11 per cent.

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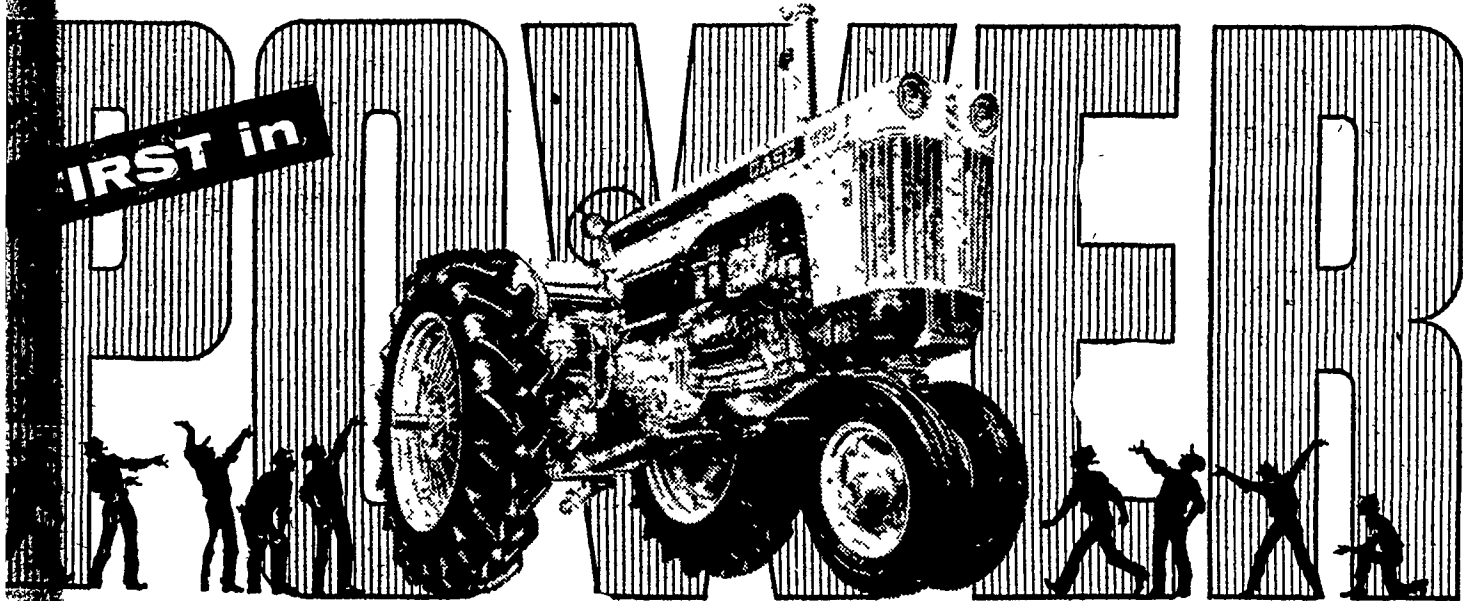
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