

Swine — Meat vs. Fat

The number of swine in Pennsylvania increased 12 per cent during the past year, the State Crop Reporting Service announced recently.

Lancaster County led the state in swine production in 1968 with 76,000 head worth \$2.6 million. Recent indications are that interest in swine production is continuing high in the county and our guess is that Lancaster County is continuing number one in swine.

Max Smith, county agriculture agent, said last week, "Many swine producers are expanding and some new men are entering the business. The number of requests for assistance this past year reflects the interest in this red meat enterprise."

While Smith cautioned against assuming that hog prices will continue as favorable as during the past five years, he also said, "One favorable part of the swine outlook picture is a growing consumer demand for the product, and other red meats are enjoying similar market demands and prices."

Forecasts received by Lancaster Farming indicate hog prices are likely to remain favorable for at least several months — more good news for the swine producer.

Why Not Quality?

In the light of the generally favorable swine news, it's unfortunate that the growing interest in swine production has not so far extended to include the quality, as well as quantity, of the animals.

We're referring to swine growers' complaints, reported here in the past few weeks, that auction buyers won't pay much more for a meaty hog than a fatty hog.

Robert Martin, president of the Lancaster County Swine Producers Association, said auction buyers will pay only about 15 cents a hundredweight premium for meaty hogs.

In view of the tremendous difference between the better meaty hogs and their poorer fatty counterparts, the slight price difference is hardly worth mentioning.

That auction buyers can't or won't recognize a good hog from a poor one seems to us to be unfortunate for everyone concerned.

It's Unfortunate

It's unfortunate for auctions and auction buyers because it causes a growing number of the better meaty hog growers to turn to direct selling to butchers for the \$1 to \$1.50 a hundredweight premium they can get.

It's unfortunate for the better hog producers because it forces them to accept prices lower than they deserve or else to seek out new markets.

It's unfortunate for the consuming public because the poor pricing system encourages inferior, fatty pork at grocery stores and meat markets.

If he gets little or nothing for it, why should the pork producer spend a lot of time and money, both extremely valuable in today's fast moving world, to produce top quality pork?

Many farmers, of course, will continue to produce the best animals they possibly can, even though their extra effort isn't adequately rewarded. It's a matter of pride with them to have the best animals they can.

But it would appear that pride isn't enough.

Farmers are businessmen.

Good Pricing System

While pride may keep the quality of hogs high on a limited number of farms, a reasonable pricing system would stand a far better chance of improving quality industry-wide.

A good pricing system is almost certainly needed to keep hogs competitive with increasingly efficient poultry and beef producers.

The results of the Lancaster County Swine Producer's carcass show last week give an indication of why meatiness deserves top consideration.

The winning pig from Dutch Valley Farms of Manheim had 41.8 per cent of its total carcass weight in the hams and loins, the prime meat areas of a pig.

The tenth ranked pig had only 36.5 per cent of its weight in the hams and loins.

That's a difference of more than five per cent between the first and tenth ranked pigs out of 19 submitted.

Assuming that further substantial differences exist between the tenth and nineteenth ranked pigs and further assuming that swine producers who entered the carcass show submitted their better animals, it becomes evident that there is a tremendous difference between the meatiness of the top pigs and the average pig submitted for slaughter.

About 10 Pounds

The five per cent difference between the first and tenth pigs alone amounts to about 10 pounds of top ham and loin in the average 200 pound pig.

Look at some other figures. The winning pig had 7.6 square inches of loin eye. The other top ten pigs varied from 4.6 to 6 square inches of loin eye.

The winning pig had one inch of back fat. Back fat on the other nine pigs varied from .9 to 1.3 inches, with five of the nine showing 1.1 inches or more.

For those who have a stake in the future of the swine business, it's something to think about.

Are we going to continue to give the public fat, which it increasingly doesn't want, or good lean meat, which it increasingly does want?

Feed, a Good Buy

Milk prices are the highest ever U.S. dairymen received over \$6 billion in milk income last year for the first time. Livestock prices have been particularly good.

While production costs have been going up too, there's one particularly bright spot. The feed-milk and feed-livestock price ratios have been on a long-term trend favorable to the farmer.

These ratios involve the pounds of feed

needed to produce a pound of milk or meat. Obviously, the more feed a pound of milk or livestock will buy, the better off the farmer is in terms of keeping his milk and beef production costs down.

Improving steadily, the milk-feed ratio, for instance, was 1.08 in 1910, it was 1.24 in 1950, 1.45 in 1960, and 1.73 in 1969. This means 100 pounds of milk will buy 41 per cent more feed now than in 1950, and 20 per cent more than in 1960.

Farmers have responded by feeding 124 per cent more grain per milk cow now than in 1950 and 62 per cent more than 10 years ago. The good feed-product ratio encourages feeding of crops.

Farmers should remain alert, however, for the time when price trends reverse and feed costs rise relative to prices received for milk and meat. If and when that time comes, perhaps a considerable distance in the future, there will be a new squeeze on profits. Farmers will then have to look for ways to reduce costs, possibly by feeding less, or increase income, possibly by growing more crops.

For now, feed is a good buy and worth more on the hoof than on the market.



NOW IS THE TIME . . .

By Max Smith
Lancaster County Agent

To Plow Down Nitrogen

Crop yields depend upon many factors but the placement of nitrogen fertilizer below or near the root zone of crops such as corn and tobacco is very important. In the next few weeks many acres of ground will be turned and producers are urged to apply the bulk of the nitrogen fertilizer deep into the topsoil.

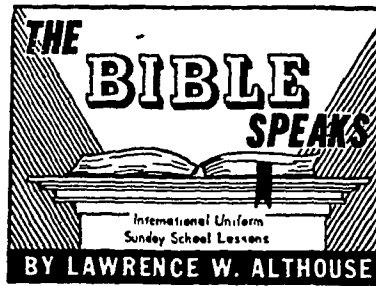
To Plant Early

There are several crops that should go into the ground just as soon as weather and soil conditions permit. Spring oats is one that can stand cold weather and yields will be greater if the crop is sowed during late March or the first week in April. Straight seedings of alfalfa and any of the pasture mixtures should be planted as

early as possible. With early plantings the crops will take advantage of the cooler spring weather and give greater returns.

To Utilize Livestock Manure

In recent years I have heard some discussion about barnyard manure not being worth the trouble of hauling and spreading. In a vast majority of the cases this source of fertilizer and organic matter is an asset and should be spread on the ground before plowing. Weather conditions this past winter made it difficult for some producers to spread the manure according to plans, regardless of where it was stored, it has value on the soil and should go there rather than in a pile



WORDS FROM THE TOMB

Lesson for March 29, 1970

Background Scripture: Job 14, Matthew 28, 1 Corinthians 15.
Devotional Reading: Psalms 110.

They found an empty tomb! Yet, there was left for them there, a message.

The first word was one of encouragement: "Do not be afraid." How much they needed this. We can well appreciate the fear that the disciples experienced on Maundy Thursday evening when Jesus was arrested in the Garden. Their fear caused them to desert their beloved Master, something they had vowed never to do.

The Easter morning risk

We can imagine also the fear that gripped the tiny band of disciples that night as, leaderless, they waited for word of the fate of Jesus. We can understand too the fear with which they followed the procession to Golgotha and witnessed that fateful event there. As they left Golgotha their fear was mingled with a profound sorrow and despair. All was lost!

Yet, perhaps a devotion which was stronger than fear led them to the garden tomb that Easter morning. They were taking a risk in coming to the grave of this man whom all Jerusalem had condemned as a criminal.

Thus, they are told: "Do not be afraid . . . he is not here; for he has risen as he said!" (28:5,6). Imagine the thoughts and feelings that came to them when they heard that message! With such a startling message as that, is it any wonder that their accounts of this incident are so fragmentary and hard to fit together?

"Come, see the place"

The second word was one of invitation — invitation to see and believe. "Come see the place

where he lay." (28:6). The messenger was not asking them to take his word alone. He offered them the opportunity to view the empty tomb and see for themselves.

Our own encounter with the Resurrection is also an invitation to "see" and believe. We may not be able to see the empty tomb ourselves, but we are asked to examine for ourselves the testimony of those who did. We are asked to consider whether the New Testament is founded upon a fictional "happy ending" or a reality that transformed the lives of men and changed the course of history.

The third word was a challenge to witness: "Then go quickly and tell all his disciples that he has risen from the dead" (28:7). This command was actually the forerunner of a more extensive call to witness that later would come from Jesus himself (28:19,20). But before they would be called to share this message with "all nations" they must first seek out their friends and share the news with them.

"There you will see Him"

Whatever we experience of the Resurrection, faith is not meant to remain a secret. It is something that must be shared with others and it is always shared best in terms of what we personally have experienced in our own lives. The average Christian is not called upon to expound a systematic theology of the Resurrection, but he is called to share what he knows of the resurrected Christ.

The messenger concludes with a fourth word, a word of promise: "He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him" (28:7). This is the most important evidence of all: to experience the resurrected Christ for ourselves. It is one thing to examine the empty tomb, to hear the proclamation of the Resurrection, but the final evidence is our own encounter with the living Lord.

"So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples" (28:8). That's the spirit of Easter: get going and share the good news! In our hearts there is mingled the combination of awe, wonder, and joy. The message of Easter must be shared:

Christ lives!
I have encountered the risen Lord!
You can experience him too!

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