

# Lean Meat Is Favored By Consumers

Dramatic changes have occurred in recent years in the type and carcass quality of meat animals. The shortlegged, compact, deep bodied, fat animals that were popular in the past are no longer desirable—both from the aspect of economical production and consumer satisfaction.

Consumers tend to favor the resulting leaner meat because of a growing awareness of the relationship between calories in the diet and human weight, says Dr. John H. Ziegler, associate professor of meat science at The Pennsylvania State University.

Livestock producers also favor the modern meat animal, he reports, since they realize that this type is a faster and more economical weight gainer than the old type animal. The new-type animals have less outside fat and a higher percentage of edible meat.

Changes in meat animals were described recently by Dr. Ziegler and W. C. Keck, graduate assistant in animal industry, in a special foods issue of "Science in Agriculture," the quarterly magazine of the Agricultural Experiment Station at Penn State. Copies are available free from the Agricultural Mailing Room, 112 Ag. Adm. Bldg., University Park, Pa. 16802.

From all indications, today's livestock yield higher percentages of leaner meat at earlier ages, the authors observed. "This fact may be one of the most significant changes occurring with meat animals and their products. If this change continues, livestock producers will be able to increase total red meat production more by improved breeding and feeding than by increasing livestock numbers on farms.

They indicated that more than two-thirds of all beef cattle in the U.S. are grown on concentrated rations which, for the most part, yield rapid gains and desirably finished meat animals at younger ages than previously. The top three grades for beef are Prime, Choice, and Good. In the last 25 years, the amount of beef graded as Choice has more than doubled to make up 59 per cent of all beef produced. Prime and Good grades have remained fairly steady at about four per cent and 16 per cent, respectively.

Ability to feed and market cattle at higher grades and younger ages was shown in a study of 352 crossbred steers and heifers. The animals were fed and managed for maximum, rapid production with the most favorable amounts of forages and cannery wastes.

These cattle were extremely mature at about 14 months of age with less than one-half inch of outside fat. They lacked enough marbling to get into the Prime grade but were highly acceptable by taste panel standards. The study was a cooperative project between the College of Agriculture and the State Correctional Institution at Rockview.

Dr. Ziegler indicated pork production is even more noteworthy than beef with revolutionary changes occurring in the last 30 years. The pork industry concentrated largely on breeding and management practices to reduce carcass fat.

The early weight gains of a meat animal are primarily lean tissue which is both rapid and economical. Thus, the simple practice of marketing hogs at earlier ages and lower weights than previously has increased pork quality from the standpoint of youthful tenderness and reduce fatness.

Selection for leaner hogs has also helped. Between 1940 and 1970, such changes yielded modern pork with about one-fifth more protein, one-half less fat, and one-third fewer calories.

Many hogs raised at Penn State are ready for market at 5 months of age, somewhat parallel to the modern beef production picture. Research continues, largely to make hog gains still more rapid and economical.

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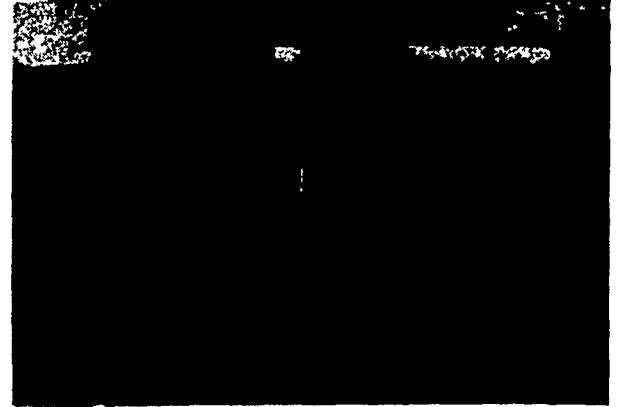
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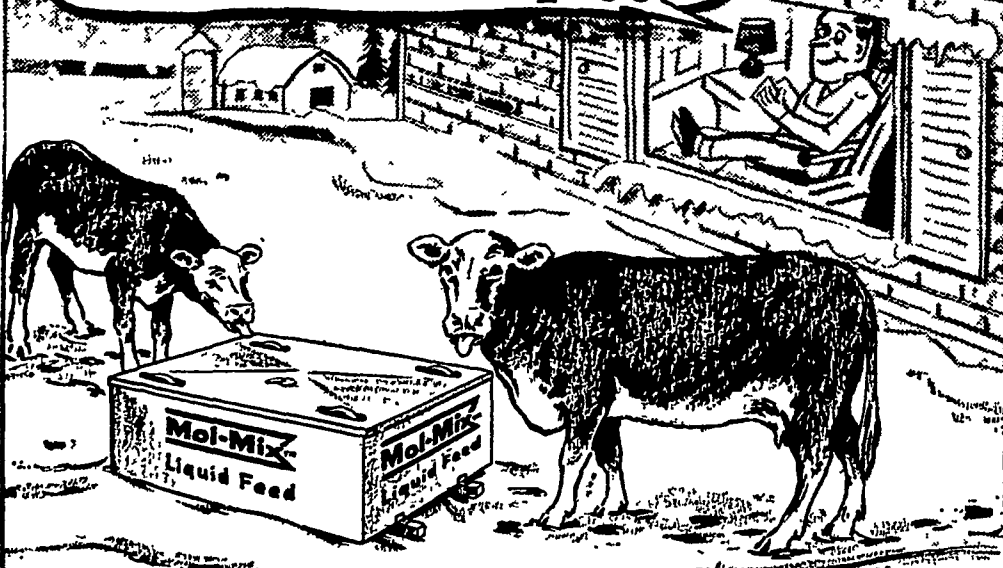
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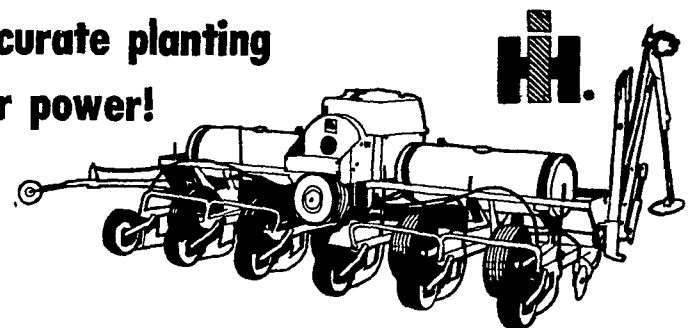
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