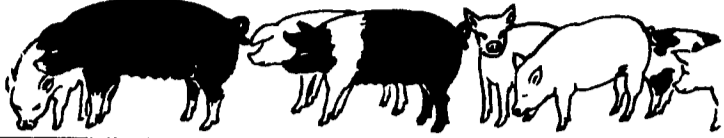


# Pork Prose

by  
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### New Hatfield Grading Program

Most producers are aware that Hatfield Quality Meats has expanded its slaughtering operation. Previous capacity was about 3,800 hogs per day. Beginning the week of October 17, Hatfield started killing about 4,500 per day. The maximum capacity of 10,000 per day will probably be reached within a year or two. It's not clear yet how this increased slaughter capacity will affect Pennsylvania's producers, but we're all hoping demand (and prices) will go up. At maximum capacity, Hatfield could kill twice as many hogs as Pennsylvania presently produces.

The other big change at Hatfield is the carcass grading program. This new carcass pricing system, which began November 14, will, at long last, pay producers on the basis of quality. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to provide a lot of input into this program. Let's take a look at how it will work, and what it will mean to you in dollars and sense.

### THE CARCASS PROGRAM IN A NUTSHELL

The new grade and weight program is based on measurements from a device called a "Fat-O-Meater." The measurements are automatically sent to a computer that calculates the percentage lean cuts (ham, loin, shoulder) in the carcass. Producers are paid on carcass weight and could receive a bonus or discount, depending on the percentage of lean cuts in each hog.

How does this compare to the old program? With the old program, the grader, by visual appraisal, put backfat into one of three categories. With the new program, the machine measures every hog precisely.

In addition, with the old program, carcass price was based in part on carcass yield (carcass weight divided by live weight). With the new program, the carcass yield for your hogs will have no effect on price, and it shouldn't. Carcass yield is affected by a lot of things—backfat, muscling, gut, fill, time of day the hogs were loaded, and type of feed, just to name a few. If a load of hogs has a high carcass yield, it doesn't mean

the hogs are better than a load with a lower yield.

With the new program, live hogs must weigh between 210 and 260 pounds. If they don't, you'll be discounted heavily or be told to take the load back home.

### THE FAT-O-MEATER

The Fat-O-Meater is a device

that uses a 10-inch probe to measure fat depth and loin eye depth (not loin eye area). The grader inserts the probe on the outside of the carcass between the 10th and 11th rib, which is fairly easy even at 400 carcasses an hour. A plexi-glass guard around the probe forces the grader to put the probe into

every hog at exactly the same angle.

One drawback to the Fat-O-Meater is the fact that some hogs have "kidney" shaped loin eyes. In those hogs, the device would measure a higher fat depth and a lower loin depth. Another disadvantage

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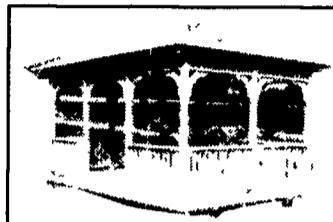
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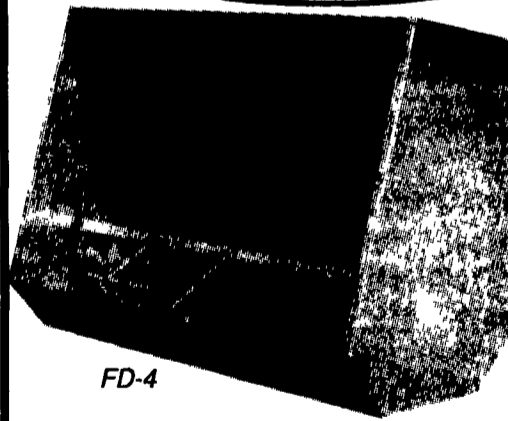
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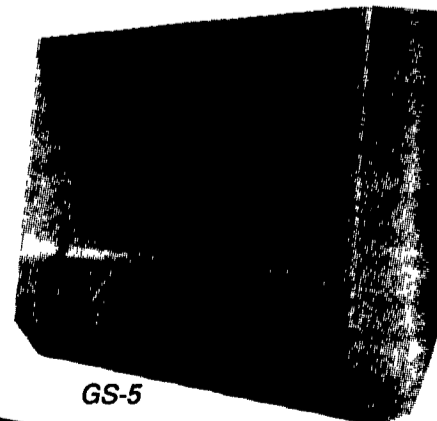


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