

PIGS IN CANTERBURY.

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Development of agricultural pursuits arises from a variety of causes. Natural facilities of climate and country are the first inducements, and the absence of bush, combined with the presence of wide areas of grazing country played a very big part in the early development of farming in the South Island. As far back as 1875 even before it was possible to find an outlet for the perishable goods produced, there was considerable development of the sheep industry. Subsequently the introduction of refrigeration, of milking machines, of separators and butter-making machinery, and of top-dressing, the influence of price levels and of payment for quality have all played a most important part in the development of agriculture over the whole of New Zealand. These and other factors have also reacted on the production of pigs.

Pig numbers have varied considerably over the last seventy years, but by comparison with the whole of New Zealand pigs in Canterbury have been virtually at a standstill. The following table shows the numbers of pigs in Canterbury, Otago and New Zealand for the last seventy years, at intervals of approximately ten years:-

Pig Population.

<u>Year.</u>	<u>Canterbury</u>	<u>Otago</u>	<u>New Zealand.</u>
1864	18,028	79,537	61,276
1874	37,181	20,283	123,921
1886	112,320	51,400	277,901
1896	64,157	37,646	239,778
1906	53,412	34,252	249,727
1916	36,917	23,304	283,770
1926	48,370	30,806	472,538
1936	50,972	38,733	808,463

Up till 1896 there was a progressive increase in pig numbers, due probably to a demand for pigs coupled with a surplus feed supply, but after this date Canterbury shows a gradual decline, while there is a markedly increasing expansion for the rest of New Zealand associated with the development of dairying, but lagging sadly behind it.

By the year 1898 the cropping resources of Canterbury were generously developed, and have made very little advance since that time. The following table shows the areas under grain, and under root crops, for Canterbury, for Otago, and for the rest of New Zealand by ten-year periods since 1898:-

<u>Year.</u>	<u>Area under Cereals (acres).</u>			<u>Area under Roots, Green Crops, etc. (acres).</u>		
	<u>Canterbury.</u>	<u>Otago.</u>	<u>New Zealand.</u>	<u>Canterbury.</u>	<u>Otago.</u>	<u>New Zealand.</u>
1898	333,000	287,000	727,000	216,000	212,000	565,000
1906	325,000	227,000	648,000	237,000	219,000	648,000
1916	466,000	234,000	844,000	242,000	200,000	780,000
1926	315,000	176,000	577,000	244,000	268,000	760,000
1936	428,030	164,000	688,200	256,000	200,000	691,000

The gross revenue earning capacity of the 1936 Canterbury areas at an average of £7 per acre for cereals and £3 per acre for roots amounts to about £4,200,000 when marketed through the present channels, and of this amount probably not more than half is nett revenue, the remainder being absorbed in overhead and cultivation expenses. The produce of this acreage marketed as pigs (baconers at £3.10.0 per head) would show a gross return of about £5,200,000, and with production costs as they are now, and the overhead of pig-keeping at 20 per cent. of the whole value of the pigs there would still remain the same nett income of £2,100,000 as estimated. Under the present circumstances one million sterling more would have been spent as wages, etc., in Canterbury with pigs than is being spent without them.

The self-respecting producer naturally resents such a suggestion and reasonably enquires by what authority an assertion of the above nature is made. He brings forward years of experience to prove that pigs are unprofitable, that they have been tried on previous occasions, and -generally he is antagonised by these improved suggestions. One freely admit-s the general value of past experience, but in the case of pigs past experience is similar to the first attempts made to ride a bicycle. Most grain-farmers who have fed pigs have treated them exactly as they treat other kinds of live-stock; buy the best that is available and feed them as well as they can. They have fallen down on the feeding of pigs. With other classes of live-stock feeding them as well as possible meant plenty of grass or other unharvested and therefore cheap feed; with pigs it meant using plenty of grain, a harvested and therefore costly crop. Because it called for fore thought and arrangement, a cheap feed supply attainable by diluting grain with as much paddock feed as possible was seldom used, and pigs were seldom profitable. One ton of feed turned into pig-meat at 5d. per pound is worth about £6.10.0., and when it costs this amount or is worth it when sold as grain it is obvious why there is no profit. The same ton of grain fed along with another 10 tons of roots, say half an acre of swedes at £4. per 2cre, provides two tons of feed (ten tons of roots equal a ton of feed), at about £4. per ton, leaving a margin for profit and overhead of about 40 per cent. of the value of the feed. A few farmers here and there are applying these principles and making profit from pigs.

Grass and clover are as cheap and satisfactory as roots and recent trend towards the more extensive use of clover in the South Island may present an opportunity for the development of pigs. Lucerne grazed with pigs receiving no supplementary feed gave a return of about 14/- per acre per month; grazed with pigs receiving half a pound of oats and half a pound of meat-meal daily, gave a return of about £2 per acre per month after paying for the meal used. There are few stock-raising practices that are capable of showing better returns than this.

Transport Costs.

It is a fundamental principle of trade that only concentrated produce can be transported. Manufactured articles are carried long distances; raw material unless high-priced is seldom so carried. New Zealand wool is a case of high-priced raw material. Pigs are high-priced manufactured grain products, and although some grain is transported the bulk of the pigs produced in the world are reared in grain-producing areas. The surplus @rain and milling offals produced in Canterbury, if used there as pig feed could be almost doubled up in value by comparison with their present worth.

Profit the only Motive.

Reward for effort spent is the only motive that interests anyone in any project, and there is no doubt that

farmers find other branches of farming more satisfying than pigs. Pigs under primitive conditions are dirty, objectionable and generally so disreputable that most people are glad to leave them alone. When a little money is spent on accommodation and equipment and when reasonable conveniences are provided, the pig becomes as respectable and as much a source of owner pride as any other animal on the farm. This pride of ownership can be achieved for an expenditure of about £15 per sow for accommodation, and such a capital expenditure has, by comparison with other branches of live-stock, no equal from the earning point of view. A sow producing 14 baconers per year at £3. per head earns a gross amount of £42. A sow and her progeny, two litters of baconers (14), per year eats as much feed as two dairy cows each producing 350 lb. of butterfat, but the sow's food is of better quality and the return is greater. The labour required for pigs is less since one man can with proper accommodation attend to fifty sows. The capital required for pigs to earn the same gross revenue as cows is about half the amount required for cows.

Disadvantages of Pigs.

There are disadvantages - (1) It takes six months to grow the crop and another six months to convert the crop into pig meat, thus there is a delayed return by comparison with dairy cows; (2) the need for planning ahead with pigs; (3) natural resources provide little pig feed, whereas the bulk of cow feed is provided by these means, and (4) finally there are difficulties of getting finance to provide accommodation for pigs in which no one is really interested.

Up to the present these disadvantages combined with the many other alternative means of making a livelihood without the assistance of pigs on mixed farms in the South Island have kept pigs in the backyard. Natural laws have a way of asserting themselves, however, and in the end pigs must be developed more intensively in the South Island.

Pigs and Skim-milk.

There is a fixed opinion everywhere that pigs cannot be fed profitably in the absence of skim-milk. Another idea is that pigs are scavengers, the latter with all the dire consequences of pigs being treated as scavengers. Both of these ideas are particular translations of the very much wider and generally established fact that pigs are profitable only where their feed supply costs less than the value of pig-meat produced. As milk or as garbage the feed supply is relatively costless. With this natural facility of cheap feed pigs are popular.

It is, however, not impossible to procure a feed supply that is cheap by a timely attention to detail and planning in advance. Those grain-farmers who use feeds that can be stored, are in a particularly fortunate position since they are not forced to buy pigs when the feed becomes available and sell when it goes off, as the dairy-farmers are. They can buy when prices suit them best and plan their selling weeks in advance of actual sales. Many grain-farmers have appreciated this advantage of winter production and have taken advantage of cheap autumn stores and dear spring stores, as is evident from the gradually narrowing of price differences between autumn and spring weaners.

This is an easy and profitable way of starting with pigs, and cases are on record where grain, fed along with roots, to winter stores returned as much as ten shillings per bushel after paying for roots at five shillings per ton.

DISCUSSION.

Mr. Flay, Lincoln:

So far as Canterbury is concerned, pigs are as yet left in the background, and are not, practically speaking, developed at all. The farmer has the feed - mangels, grain, young grass and pastures, seconds of wheat, peas and barley, and does not need to go to the trouble of producing these, but he has not got the organisation. He has straw in abundance, and all he needs to do is to throw some of the straw over the fence and call that a pig-house. If he gets two coils of cyclone netting and puts it round his straw stack, there are his pig pens, and when these things are done he must start to breed his own pigs. He must not continue the practice of buying in stores at £2, or £1/10/- or even at £1/-/- per head. The pig industry in Canterbury must be associated with breeding because the farmer has all these facilities at his hand,

Mr. Scott referred to the static state of the South Island. This may be so in Otago, and particularly Southland. But Canterbury is different. We have to keep in mind that it is still a cropping area, and it is to the credit of the Canterbury people that they have been able to maintain its fertility in its present state.

Mr. R.B. Tennent, Wellington:

One point has been overlooked. Remarks have been made in regard to the abundance of skimmed milk in the North Island and the lack of grain, and of abundance of grain in the South Island and lack of milk. So far as the milk in the North Island is concerned, this is a product which has no ready sale. It must be utilised quickly if any good is to be made of it. The best method is feeding it to the pig, along with grain and root feeding.

The South Island is different. They have seconds of wheat, barley and abundance of grain for which there is a ready market, and consequently so long as there is a ready market for these byproducts, you will not find the average Canterbury farmer taking up pig farming.

It is not an attractive game. There is a considerable amount of labour in it. It takes a man all his time to look after the pigs, and in districts like Canterbury this is an important factor. Unless it can be adequately shown that the pig, under Canterbury conditions, grain-fed, and supplemented by roots and grass where possible is a profitable proposition, and unless it can be made more attractive than it is at present, I am afraid the position so far as Canterbury is concerned, will remain fairly static.

Mr. Flay, Lincoln:

I am interested in some farms on each of which we have developed a herd of 5 or 6 cows, 3 or 4 sows, and a boar. By utilising the skim milk from these few cows and supplementing with grain and roots, we have made anything from £50 to £150, depending on circumstances, and the ready sale for the porkers, weaners or baconers as the case might be.

Mr. M. J. Scott, Wellington:

Whey can be made as profitable almost as skim milk. One man in Orari with 60 cows takes £3 nett from his cows and whey. A little bit of grain and a very large quantity of roots was the first essential. Conditions for the pigs which made them

not objectionable to these who handled them were of almost equal importance.

As to the breeding of the pig being a first essential, I am not in accord with this. The mixed farmer is in the most fortunate position. He can buy his stores in the most favourable market in Kay, June and July. The experience gained by buying his store pigs at the beginning of the winter would be most valuable to the mixed farmer in Canterbury.

The, Chairman;

So far as conversion of crops into pig and meat is concerned, we have here rather an interesting feature. In Canterbury in 1886, owing to the fact that there was a very considerable trade in bacon to Australia, the keeping of pigs was moderately right from the standpoint of being able to get rid of the product at a fairly reasonable price.

Now 1886 was a very significant date. It was the year following the start of the frozen meat industry, in New Zealand, and the frozen meat industry in its initial stages was devoted almost entirely to the freezing of mutton and lamb. That opened up a tremendous outlet for meat production, and Otago and Canterbury farmers put all their energies into sheep and lambs. Forty years later, 1926 marks the first development of the export of frozen pork and baconers to the United Kingdom. Between 1886 and 1926 there has been no farm product which has suffered so severely from instability of prices as the pig meat. Since 1926 when the pig industry assumed fairly large proportions (30,000 tons) there has been a real stabilisation in the price of pig meat.

Since 1926, the North Island, with opportunities for pig production far inferior to much of the South, has decided to cash in on that trade. The South Island has decided not to. The pig is the most efficient converter of farm crops into meat, and from the fact that we now have a stabilised export of that material, and an export which can be increased enormously, one feels that sooner or later the South island, in addition to its other lines of production, will decide that it is not a bad scheme to convert some of its crops at all events into pig meat - the animal which is most convertible.