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Timely Farm Suggestions

By TAIT BUTLER

Which Is the Easier?

A READER in a letter says: "Marketing is much more important than all rich lands and improved methods of farming."

We do not think it worth while to discuss this question but submit the following question to our good friend, and when he answers it we believe there will be no further need for continuing the discussion:

Which is easier and more likely to be attained. To increase the yield of cotton from 200 pounds of lint per acre to 300 pounds by increasing soil fertility and better methods of farming, or to raise the price through attention to marketing from 25 cents a pound to 37½ cents a pound?

Feeding Sugar Cane to Hogs

A READER asks: "Which will pay better, to make a fairly good three-quarters acre of Louisiana cane into syrup or to chop up into short pieces and feed to hogs, with syrup at 50 cents per gallon and hogs at $16 per hundred pounds, considering difference in cost?"

We cannot give a definite answer to this question, because so much depends on the facilities or equipment available for doing the work and the efficiency of the methods. For instance, the per cent of the juice extracted varies from 50 to 75, according to the efficiency of the machinery. The quality of the syrup and consequently its selling price also varies greatly according to the efficiency of the syrup making and the marketing.

But as a general rule, with fair efficiency in manufacturing, we believe it will pay better to make the cane juice into syrup than to feed the cut-up cane to hogs at the prices stated. Cane is not a very satisfactory feed for hogs. They cannot handle such a feed to advantage and the portions not eaten, or the waste, are large. Of course, something also depends on the manner of feeding. If the cane forms only a small part of the hog ration and there is no other succulent feed a higher value will be obtained from it than when the cane is fed more largely and the ration consequently is not so suitable or so well balanced. A high value might be obtained from this cane if fed as only a fourth to a third of the ration with peanuts, soy beans or velvet beans. Cattle handle a feed like green cane much better than hogs, for the hog, having a small stomach and poor facilities for handling coarse, bulky feeds, requires more concentrates or grains. In other words, he can use to advantage a little of such a bulky, succulent feed, but if it forms a large part of his ration he does not utilize it so well.

Very Little Danger in Feeding Frost-bitten Velvet Beans

A READER has Osceola and Early Speckled velvet beans that were killed by frost before they were matured. The beans in the pods have turned black, but his cattle eat them readily. He cannot pasture the land and had intended to pick the beans and grind them in the pod for feeding cattle, but is told that "frost-bitten beans will kill cattle."

It is truly remarkable how hard it is to correct an error once given general publicity. There is a very general belief that any plant, but particularly legumes and sorghum, if killed by frost before maturity will injure livestock if it is fed to them. We have numerous inquiries this fall about even velvet beans, notwithstanding it is generally known that they are not usually pastured until after frost and that frequently they are more or less green when the first killing frost comes.

As we have stated before, the killing of forage plants by frost is not likely to make them injurious to livestock. Injury to some kinds of animals, particularly horses and mules, may occur if they are fed forage which is decaying or moldy. If the legumes are very green and watery and decay or rotting occurs after the killing by frost, as may take place in damp or rainy weather, there is danger in feeding this decaying material to horses and mules. But if the frost-bitten forage dries out and cures without decay and mold there is not likely to be any injury to any livestock from eating it.

In this case, if the pods dry out hard and sound, they may be soaked or ground and fed without injury to the stock. If, however, they do not dry out hard and sound, or decay, it would not be well to feed them to horses and mules; but there is little or no danger in grazing them by cattle and hogs.

When ground in the pods velvet beans are apt to mold or become stale and, therefore, they should be fed pretty soon after grinding, or they may be soaked for a short time and fed in that way. In soaking any feed it should not be allowed to ferment or sour, but should be fed after soaking a short time, fresh lots being soaked from day to day as the feed is required.

What Is the Cost of Hog Production in Terms of Corn?

IN THE mind of the American farmer there is a direct relationship between hogs and corn. We have become the greatest hog-producing nation of the world because we are the greatest corn-producing nation.

Corn being the basis of hog production, it is but natural that the hog producer measures the cost of hog production, or the selling price of hogs, in terms of corn. When corn is high-priced hogs must also bring high prices or the hog producer reduces his hog crop. The fact that corn would not bring a high price if it were not largely fed to livestock, is given little consideration by the average farmer. If he cannot get as much for his corn when fed to hogs as he can when sold as corn he promptly ceases to feed the corn to hogs, but sells it as long as it brings a higher price disposed of in that way.

Since April, 1917, although hogs have sold as high as $20 a hundred pounds and are now selling around $16 a hundred, the highest prices the hog producer of today has ever known, corn has been still higher, and if sold on the open market would have brought more than when fed and marketed in the form of live hogs. The result is that the hog producers of the Corn Belt bred fewer sows for fall litters than usual, some claiming that the crop of fall pigs did not amount to more than 50 per cent of the normal number. The fall litters, however, do not materially affect the hog production of the Corn Belt, because comparatively few sows are bred for two litters a year. The important question is, how is this disparity between the prices of corn and hogs going to affect the spring pig crop?

The large corn crop of 1917 may be expected to reduce the price of corn, but with other grains scarce and high-priced just the amount of reduction in corn prices is uncertain. Most people do not expect corn to go below a dollar a bushel and many think it will sell for from $1.25 to $1.50 a bushel next summer. Moreover, the hog feeder is feeling what he regards as a heavy loss from feeding his corn to hogs during the past months instead of selling it for the high prices which he could have obtained. This is fresh in his mind and he is not likely to take chances on repeating the loss again next summer. He is, therefore, disposed to run his spring gilts off to market during the winter, instead of breeding them for spring litters, just as he has marketed his older brood sows during the summer and fall.

Unless the hog raiser of the Corn Belt can be made to feel that he will get as much for his 1917 corn fed to hogs as he can if sold on the corn market he is not going to breed the usual number of sows this fall. The breeding season is now on, and there seems to be no time for any action that will give the hog producer this assurance of safe and just prices for hogs during the coming year. The hogs of this country are now estimated about 5,000,000 below the normal supply of 65,000,000, and there seems little hope of inducing the hog raisers of the country to stop the decreasing supply, notwithstanding the certainty that the demand will be large by our own army and the nations allied with us in war.

Consumers are complaining of the high price of pork products, but they are actually so low, compared with the price of corn, that the producer of hogs will not produce them in the usual quantities. If the consumer does not change his attitude or if he is not induced in some way to pay higher prices production will go so low that the natural law of supply and demand will within a short time send prices of hog products sky-high.

That hogs are now selling for much less than they should, on a basis of corn prices, or in other words for much less than the corn they have eaten would have sold for, is shown by the following easily proved facts:

For the last ten years, or for that matter for the last 36 years, the farmers of the United States have received on an average the price of about 11.65 bushels of corn for 100 pounds of live hogs. This may or may not have given them a profit. Probably about 9 bushels represented the cost of feed and the other 2.65 bushels all other costs, including overhead expenses, losses, and profits if such were actually made.

Starting with May, 1917, the hog producer has received for 100 pounds of live hogs the equivalent values in corn, as follows:

May 1917	9.7 bushels
June 1917	9.2 bushels
July 1917	7.6 bushels
August 1917	8.6 bushels
September 1917	8.8 bushels
October 1917	8.7 bushels

That is, instead of getting the value of 11.65 bushels of corn for 100 pounds of live hogs, or the average for the past 10 years, he has only received the value of from 7.6 bushels to 9.7 bushels of corn for 100 pounds of live hogs.

Is there any wonder that he refuses to feed his corn to hogs under those conditions?

The first lesson is, that something must be done to assure the hog raiser of a fair ratio between the price of corn and hogs if our own army and those of our allies are to be furnished the hog meat and fats they so much need.

Another lesson is that the Southern farmer should greatly increase his hog production on other feeds than corn. If the northern hog raiser decreases his crop of hogs, prices will go high and the Southern farmer, if he produces hogs economically, using a minimum of corn, can count on large profits. In fact, when large numbers are decreasing their production of a staple product in large demand is the time when the wise individual increases his production. Will the Southern farmer be wise as well as patriotic?

PASTURE PROBLEMS

Lack of Pasturage in the Late Fall and the Proper Use of Fall-sowed Cereals or Grains in Filling This Shortage

ON MANY farms the fall-sowed grains are sowed for the grain they yield without any thought as to their pasturage value. Under certain conditions such a crop can be pastured very profitably and without materially decreasing the yield of grain. In fact, for oats sowed early in the fall, pasturage may be a distinct advantage in preventing too large growth and the formation of stems. When the oat plant begins to form stems, it has reached a stage of growth at which it is seriously injured by freezing weather. These stems, when killed by a severe freeze, are not replaced and the stand and subsequent yield of either grain or pasturage is seriously curtailed.

On the other hand, too early pasturage, before the plants have become well established, is very unwise. In fact, if the crop is not sowed early in the fall, grazing during the late fall and winter is a very bad practice, not only on fields that are to be harvested for grain but also from the standpoint of subsequent winter and spring grazing on those fields to be used solely for pasturage.

New lands (those recently cleared) that are soft and on which the plants are easily pulled out by the grazing animals should not be pastured. It has also been the experience of a number of oat growers that pasturing oats planted on very heavy land has a decreasing effect on the bushels of oats harvested the following spring.

Where conditions are suitable for grazing, there are still two precautions to be observed in pasturing small grains.

1. **Keep the stock off the land while wet.** If the land is soft the tramping of the livestock in grazing will not only injure the oats, but the puddling and cutting up of the field will render future cultivation more troublesome.

2. **Avoid pasturing too closely.** Plants that have been grazed off closely to the ground are given little protection against freezing and the crop is either killed or the vitality of the roots so weakened that vigorous tillering does not occur in the spring, and a good crop of grass or grain is not produced.

The foregoing suggestions as to fall grazing are applicable to either a crop to be harvested for grain or one to be grazed during the entire period of the plant's growth. However, where grain is to be harvested, the additional precaution of discontinuing pasturing early enough to afford abundant time for the plants to tiller and head should be stressed. There is no doubt but that early fall-sowed grains can be wisely grazed during the late fall and winter without injury to the yield of grain, but it has been proved conclusively that stock should be removed as soon as the spring growth starts or the yield may be seriously curtailed.

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