



Livestock and Dairy Problems

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LIVESTOCK SUGGESTIONS FOR FEBRUARY

I.—Increase Production on Safe and Sound Basis

TO THE positive knowledge of the writer, for the last 30 years at least, large numbers of cotton farmers have, to use their own language, been "going into the livestock business," while others have been "going out of the livestock business." There have been steady streams of considerable numbers constantly going in both directions. Those "going in" have only slightly outnumbered those "going out," for it must be confessed that among "cotton planters" increased livestock production has made rather slow progress.

Little good is likely to come from a discussion of the question as to whether cotton farmers should produce livestock. Many of them resent the presence of any livestock on the farm, except the work animals needed to cultivate the cotton. Some of them, under a subdued protest, may keep a cow to supply a little milk, a pig or two around the mule lot and a few hens, but the real cotton farmer quite generally regards all these as an unmitigated nuisance.

We believe livestock production under proper management and suitable conditions is an important factor in successful farming, here as elsewhere; but the conditions vary so greatly and the "will" of the farmer is such an important factor in determining success or failure that we are quite willing to let each farmer work out his own farming system. Our business is merely to give him such information or supply him with such facts as he may desire, and we may be able to collect for him. But what we are very much more interested in, than the question as to who should or should not produce livestock, is that those who do try to increase their production should do so on a safe and sound basis, and with a fair chance of success.

II.—Go Into Hog Raising Cautiously

HOGS are produced (1) to supply the needs of the home or farm for pork, (2) to sell or ship to market for pork, as a source of income for the farm, or (3) purebred hogs are bred to sell for breeding purposes.

There is probably sound reason for the first kind of hog raising on practically every farm and no mistakes are likely to be made by any farmer engaging in the hog business to the extent of supplying the needs of the farm, or at least the needs of his home for pork. If the second kind of hog raising is undertaken, that is, the production of market hogs, it should probably be started only after the production of hogs for the first purpose has been proved satisfactory. And if the breeding of purebred hogs to sell for breeding purposes is engaged in, it should only be after the production of market hogs for pork has been made successful on a scale of considerable proportions. No man should start the breeding of purebred hogs to be sold for breeding purposes, who has not learned hog production on a pork basis and made it a success.

The mistakes of the South in the past have been numerous in both the second and third kinds of hog production, and because of these mistakes thousands after having "gone into the hog business" have found it unprofitable and then after a few years have

gone out of it again, usually with heavy losses.

It is a mistake to go into the production of pork hogs for market on anything like a large scale until one has had experience in producing pork hogs on a small scale and demonstrated, not by guess work, but by careful calculations, that he can produce pork hogs economically. It is a mistake to go into the production of pork hogs on a large scale until one has made ample arrangements in the way of houses, fencing and feed crops for handling the larger numbers, because handling 100 or 200 hogs and providing feed for them are quite different propositions from the handling of a half dozen or a dozen hogs around the barn lot.

It is a mistake to go into the production of pork hogs on a large scale until one has proved that he can produce the feed for them economically. One must be a successful producer of feed crops for hogs before he is likely to be a successful producer of market hogs. Unless the feed, nearly all of it at least, is certainly to be produced on the farm, it will be better to stay out of commercial hog raising.

The production of livestock cannot take the place of crop production. In fact, crop production must be successful before hog production can be successful. Livestock production is more difficult than crop growing because it not only involves crop growing, but also the breeding, feeding and care of livestock. It is an addition to the farming rather than a substitute for any system of crop production now practiced.

If one has made a success of commercial pork production then he has a part of the necessary foundation experience for the breeding of purebred hogs to be sold for breeding purposes, but in addition he must also learn or become proficient in the selling of purebred hogs, which is just as difficult and just as necessary as the successful growing of the breeding stock. In short, one should go into the production of hogs slowly and learn the business. First produce a few hogs economically, then gradually increase the numbers as long as the operations are successful or until the desired number is reached.

The average Southern hog producer who has failed has failed chiefly because he under-rated the difficulties of the business and because he went in too rapidly and before he had studied and learned the business, and was prepared to handle and feed the numbers kept.

It is expensive to go into hog raising on a high market and go out on a low one. Therefore, unless one is going to stay in it and knows enough about it before he goes in extensively, to know he is going to stay in it, he had better not go in at all.

III.—Producing Beef Cattle in the South

WHO has been the successful producer of beef cattle in the South and who has failed?

The man who has bought high-priced cattle before he has provided good pastures and before he has grown the feeds for these cattle has generally failed. The man who has tried to substitute the growing of beef cattle for the growing of cotton or any other money crop has generally failed.

The man who has gone into the breeding of purebred beef cattle on any considerable scale before he knew the business of breeding, feeding and

selling purebred beef cattle has usually failed. The man who has depended on buying most of the feed for his cattle has failed. The man who has depended on "cane" for winter feed, or that has depended on the "range," except in the southwest where a large range was available has failed.

The man who has gradually increased and improved his pastures and added to his herd slowly, as the pastures would keep them; the man who has selected good milking common cows and used a purebred bull; who has provided silage, legume, or other hays and roughage; who has added beef cattle grazing or breeding and feeding to his other farming or crop production and has used his cattle as a means of utilizing his waste pasture lands and as a means of marketing his rough feeds, has quite generally succeeded.

On small farms or on high-priced lands, beef production has generally failed when made the one or the chief source of revenue, or when substituted for crop production; but when added to the regular farming operations as a means of marketing soil-improving crops and the by-products of the farm, the growing and feeding of beef cattle has generally proved profitable, if gone into slowly and persisted in so that the business was learned and the periods of high prices enjoyed to offset the periods of low prices which are certain to occur.

In the raising of beef cattle more than a year is required to raise and market a crop. From the time of breeding the cows to the marketing of the produce takes from two to three years, therefore it is important that any one who goes into the breeding of beef cattle should stay in for a long term of years. The prices fluctuate and periods of high prices are followed by periods of low prices. If one is tempted into the business by high prices the market is almost certain to be low by the time he has anything to sell and unless he stays in the business long enough to get the benefit of the next swing back to high prices he is almost certain to find the business unprofitable.

IV.—Starting in Dairying

A LARGE part of the colored tenant farms are cowless. Few colored tenants in the all-cotton sections of the South have an ample supply of milk for family use. On the large cotton farms you will most generally be told that it is absolutely impracticable for each tenant to have a cow, a sow and hens for his own use. Almost certainly this is a case where the "impracticable" will have to be made "practicable," but that is a problem on which the farmer needs no help or advice. He understands the problem and will solve it when he has the "will" to do so.

We are now interested in the man who is "going into the dairy business." In the past he has too often gone out of crop production in order to go into dairying, whereas a man should go into crop production in order to be prepared to go into dairying. If his money crop has been cotton it is dangerous and generally very unwise for him to greatly reduce his cotton crop to go into dairying. If his dairying is successful, he may reduce his cotton acreage gradually and to a large extent, but to stop cotton production or to greatly reduce his acreage in one year in order to give his time to dairying, as a new business for him, is unsafe and unwise farming.

The acreage to feed crops should be increased the year before dairying is started. As a rule the number of cows should be small the first year, and, therefore the increased acreage to feed crops and the decrease of acreage to cotton or any other money crop should be small.

Again, the way to start in the dairy

business is to add a few cows and a few acres of feed crops to the money crops previously grown.

The dairy business to be successful also means that a new product must be marketed efficiently. The breeding, feeding and care of dairy cows, if efficiently done, is no small task alone; but when you add to this the selling or the manufacture and selling of the products, you have a business requiring constant attention, skillful labor and a degree of knowledge and intelligence quite beyond what is required in ordinary farming, for the need for the efficient production of crops, or ordinary farming, is not lessened but increased when dairying is added to the farming operations. Most failures of those who start in the dairy business are due to the fact that they under-rate the need for knowledge and experience in dairying, and fail to produce the feeds by the time they are required by the cows.

Of course, poor cows, poor feeding, poor marketing and many other factors have played their part, but the greatest obstacle to the success of dairying in the South has been a lack of dairy knowledge—poor dairymen—due to a failure to appreciate the need for dairy knowledge and experience when going into the business.

Hence, it is safer and usually cheaper for one to get dairy experience working for someone else, or if not that way then with only a few cows of his own.

Coöperation among neighbors to arrange a milk or cream route, by which the milk can be marketed economically, the production of ample feed, and just a few cows of the best quality obtainable at reasonable cost, furnish the best setting for starting the dairy business as another source of regular revenue to the farm. There is no objection to reducing the cotton acreage some, at least to the extent necessary to produce the feed for the few cows started with, but don't substitute dairying right at the start for cotton, rather add it to cotton production.

Warbles or Wolves in the Backs of Cattle

AS USUAL at this season of the year, many inquiries are being received about "warbles" or "wolves" or "grubs" which infest the backs of cattle.

There are two kinds of bot flies which occur in America, the larval forms of which infest cattle. The mature flies appear in warm weather, May to September, and lay eggs on the cattle. It is now generally accepted that these flies do not puncture the skin of the back when they lay their eggs, nor do the young grubs which hatch from these eggs penetrate the skin of the back. The eggs are laid on the cattle and the small grubs hatch out there, then the cattle in licking themselves, take the grubs into their mouths. These grubs are found infesting the gullet or the esophagus, and sometimes in other parts of the body, and by January make their appearance under the skin of the back by migrating through the tissues of the cow.

Some advise the introduction of any material into the back, or the cavity occupied by the grub, that will kill it. When the hole is small, any substance like kerosene can be introduced by means of a small oil can, but we do not advise this mode of treatment. When the grubs are killed and left in the back we believe the results are worse than when the live grubs are allowed to remain there.

A better plan is to slightly enlarge the small opening in the skin, with a sharp knife, squeeze out the grub or pull it out with tweezers and destroy it. It is also a good plan to fill the cavity occupied by the grub with powdered boracic acid. There is no practical way of preventing the attacks of these grubs.