

Farming and Agriculture :-: Special Features :-: Interesting Observations

NEWSY FARM NOTES

By Agricola

VITAMINS: WHAT ARE THEY?

And the answer is—nobody knows. After reading over Mr. Hamilton Tomlin's article in yesterday's issue on the results of Vitamin E as an anti-sterilizing when fed to foxes in the form of wheat germ meal, I found myself questioning the nature of these mysterious "presences."

In the first instance, no vitamin has been isolated and its nature determined. Its presence is only detected by its effects. It is known, for example, that the "water-soluble Vitamin C" is present in green vegetables and also in fruit, and that its absence from the diet will cause scurvy: this was the trouble in the old sailing ship days when salt "junk" (meat) and hard biscuits were the staple food. But cook those same fruits and vegetables thoroughly and although the chemical analysis may show no change—their effect is negative because heat has destroyed the mysterious vitamin C.

By similar feeding tests other vitamins from A to E can be shown to exist. Fat-soluble A vitamin is present in Cod Liver Oil, the roe of fish, the yolk of egg, liver, and the leaves of vegetables. Its function is to stimulate growth and fertility, and promote resistance to infective diseases. Strangely enough, its absence in diet tends to produce blindness.

Vitamin B is soluble in water, and is present in the seeds of plants, yeast, in egg yolk and in many fruits and vegetables. This vitamin besides functioning somewhat like "A", is necessary in digestion and stimulates appetite.

Water soluble vitamin C, already referred to, is only too easily destroyed by cooking or canning. Perhaps all vitamins are unstable under heat. At any rate, fresh young vegetables eaten as salads, tomatoes, lemons, grape fruit, oranges, and raw cabbage, are important sources of "C."

It is more restricted than A or B, that is, it is not found in so many different foods. Vitamin D is soluble in fat and is anti-rachitic in action. It deals with bone formation, and is most necessary for growing animals, to prevent rickets. Our richest source of this vitamin is Cod liver oil, but milk, eggs, green bone and green stuffs contain it in lesser quantities.

Vitamin E is also fat-soluble, and as already stated, is necessary to stimulate fecundity in animals. It is found chiefly in the germ of wheat, red meats, and milk. Fish are rich in vitamins which they derive from the plankton (minute animals and plants) of the sea. Primarily I commenced this article for the benefit of the fox-rancher, but as I went along, it grew upon me that there was an application even more important. What a race would we become if the same care in feeding were bestowed upon our growing children as we bestow on our foxes!

Our foodstuffs are too often deprived of these valuable "presences" by over-elaborate preparation. The taste—to put it mildly—for white bread has led the miller to take away the germ of the wheat and the outer layer of the "berry" and these, the richest parts, are fed to the farm stock, while we use the impoverished remainder, the white flour. Another matter of interest is that the milk of cows fed on green grass is rich in vitamin A while that of stall-fed cows is deficient.

CALF CLUBS DEVELOP STOCKMEN

Calf feeding competitions are doing a valuable work in training boys in the care of cattle. From a start of ten clubs organized in the Province of Quebec seven years ago, there are now in operation upwards of seventy-five clubs in which the young people are gaining valuable experience in the proper feeding, handling and exhibiting of calves. The work is carried on jointly by the federal and provincial Departments of Agriculture, each providing fifty per cent of the prize money awarded and sharing the supervision of the clubs during the year. The youths start with young calves of good type and breeding and feed and care for them continuously under supervision until the following year when they are brought together as yearlings for competition. Some of the Clubs have as high as eighty members. The bringing together of the stock of so many enthusiastic young people arouses great interest and it is stated by the Hon. W. R. Motherwell, Minister of Agriculture at Ottawa, in his report for the past fiscal year, that an attendance of a thousand or more at a Calf Fair is not unusual. The influence of this work in the district is far reaching and Clubs rapidly develop into community breeding centres for high class cattle. The Minister also points out the additional value of this work in the training it affords the boys in all phases of live stock feeding and management and in the keeping of record of feed costs and production.

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Cheese Prices Good

At the Annual Convention of the Dairymen's Association, held at Belleville, Ont., in January, Mr. J. A. Ruddick, Dominion Dairy Commissioner, was very optimistic as to the future of cheese-making, and gave an illuminating account of last year's progress. In one part of his address Mr. Ruddick said: "The season of 1928 was a notable one in more than one respect. While possibly not ideal, the climatic conditions were, on the whole, favorable for the production of milk. In any case, the output of cheese in 1928, for all Canada, will be found to exceed that of 1927 by 8 million or 10 million pounds, possibly more. There was a wider spread than usual in comparative prices for butter and cheese, and this favored some diversion of milk from the creamery to the cheese factory. The average price of cheese for the season was exceptionally high, and very nearly three cents per pound above the price obtained in 1927. The premium paid in the United Kingdom over all competitors was higher than it ever was before. According to the grading returns, there was more improvement in the quality of Canadian cheese in 1928 than in any other year since grading was inaugurated. Canada gets around one and a half cents more for her cheese on the foreign market than is paid for any other cheese of the same class." Dr. Ruddick explained, "I think we always shall. There seems to be something in our land that gives our cheese a little better flavor than New Zealand for example. In fact, some parts of Canada produce better cheese than others."

Canada produced the most milk in its history this year but to a greater extent than heretofore it was drunk as fresh milk or made into products other than cheese. We have more cows than ever and better cows, better in breeding, better fed, and better cared for."

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Potatoes Loom Large In U. S. A.

R. W. Slayer, assistant trade commissioner in New York City, states that the holdings of potatoes in the 35 potato-growing states, are about 30 percent greater than at this time last year. Heavy production in the southern states has retarded the marketing in the northern states, from which the surplus is, under normal conditions, shipped. The number of bushels still on hand in the northern states on January 1st, 1929, was estimated at 110,729,000, as compared with 88,693,000 on the same date of 1928. In the others—the more southern late-potato states—where usually the quantity grown is not sufficient to take care of the local needs as the winter wears on, there was on January 1st a holding of 20,206,000 bushels, as compared with 11,063,000 bushels last year.

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