THESE FEEDER PIGS LOOK HAPP, CONTENTED

PIGGERY IS MECHANIZED

Hog production becoming increasingly big business

By NEIL A. MATHESON
Provincial and Farm Editor

Hog production on a large scale has developed in Prince Edward Island in the past few years. There are a number of people operating plants with a capacity of 1,000 hogs at a time. Others have slightly lesser operations.

I visited the Alexandra plant where two brothers, Donald and Chris Judson, and a neighbour Charlie Jones, have an interesting operation underway.

The building—it's a quonset type— is 204 feet long, 36 feet wide with a height of 14 feet in the centre. It's covered with steel, has plywood sheathing on the inside, and is insulated with two inches of fibreglass.

There are no windows in the building but the ventilation is controlled by four-inch shutters running the entire length of the building on west side. On the east side there are 10 fans sucking out the air. The fans are automatically controlled—they are activated by temperature control with the thermostat set at 55—and they can change the air in the building in one and one-half minutes, Mr. Jones told this paper when all of the shutters are open.

There are 100 pens in the building. They are four feet wide and 15 feet side. They start to slope to the outside—one inch in back. The long, narrow pens are best for keeping clean, the pigs are not so likely to mess them up, Mr. Jones explained.

It takes slightly more than an hour for one man to clean the pens—they are scraped down daily.

The labor-saving benefits of the huge plant is perhaps the most striking feature.

The entire operation requires the equivalent in labor of one man for four to five hours daily it was learned.

The feeding is automatic and the big silo-like feed tanks at the front of the building hold 16 tons each. The feed is blown into them from the truck —there's an air blast machine—that hauls into the automatic feeder.

CLOCK CONTROL

The times of feeding are regulated by a time-clock. The animals are fed five times a day. The feed drops on to the concrete floor. There is no restriction on the amount of feed until the pigs are 150 pounds. There is some restriction on the amount from that to the time they are 200 to 205 pounds, and ready for market. Grower is fed throughout in this automatic feeder.

The feed efficiency has been good, Mr. Jones said for himself and his partners, Donald and Chris Judson. The animals are growing from 30 pounds to 200 on five and one-half bags—550 pounds—of feed.

The carcass grades were described as "excellent." They run about 72 percent. A's which the partners find satisfactory.

There is one exception to the automatic feeding. Some 15 to 20 pens— I didn't get an exact count— are held for the weaner pigs when they first come in. These pens are hand fed and this makes sense. The newcomers are watched fairly closely for the first week or so. Their intake of feed is watched. The animals are watched very closely for any symptoms of disease, particularly in the first few days.

It takes about four to five weeks to get the weaners ready to put into the regular pens. They are fed starter for a time until they can be shifted to the grower.

They have Yorkshires, Landrace and Lacombe pigs in the big barn and crosses of these. They have some Wessex Saddleback crosses. A lot of it is Landrace-York crosses.

The best cross in the white pigs, the partners told me, is the Lacombe-York. They go out in almost three months, which is really fast. The feed conversion of the cross breds is best.

The Wessex Saddlebacks have a few dark spots on them. The pure bred animal of that breed is black, with a white band around the middle. They're an English breed though the ones on the Island came here from Alberta, Mr. Jones said.

The partners are satisfied with the arrangement of the building. The only question is with the manure storage tanks. There are two of them and they are 16 feet by 20 feet, and are nine feet deep.

They are scarcely large enough. They fill in about one month, and this can be bothersome in winter, when bad weather may be experienced.

The manure is liquefied. A big augur agitates it and pumps it out at the rate of 700 gallons per minute. There are no difficulties with manure solids, the partners explained.

The price of carcass pork has been good in the past year. It went as high as $41.75 per 100 pounds at one time not so many months ago. It was $31 in mid-April which still allows for a modest profit margin.

The price of weaner pigs has also dropped. It was $54 a pair at one time. It was $35 a pair when I visited the partners at Alexandra just after the middle of April.

Scoring hog carcasses

OTTAWA — A new method of scoring carcasses has been introduced into the record of performance program for swine.

The new approach is expected to provide a more accurate appraisal of carcass value and enhance the usefulness of the program, say officers of CDA's Livestock Division.

Scoring under the new system is based on a calculation of the yield of saleable trimmed cuts in a carcass rather than on the total of the points awarded for various measurements.

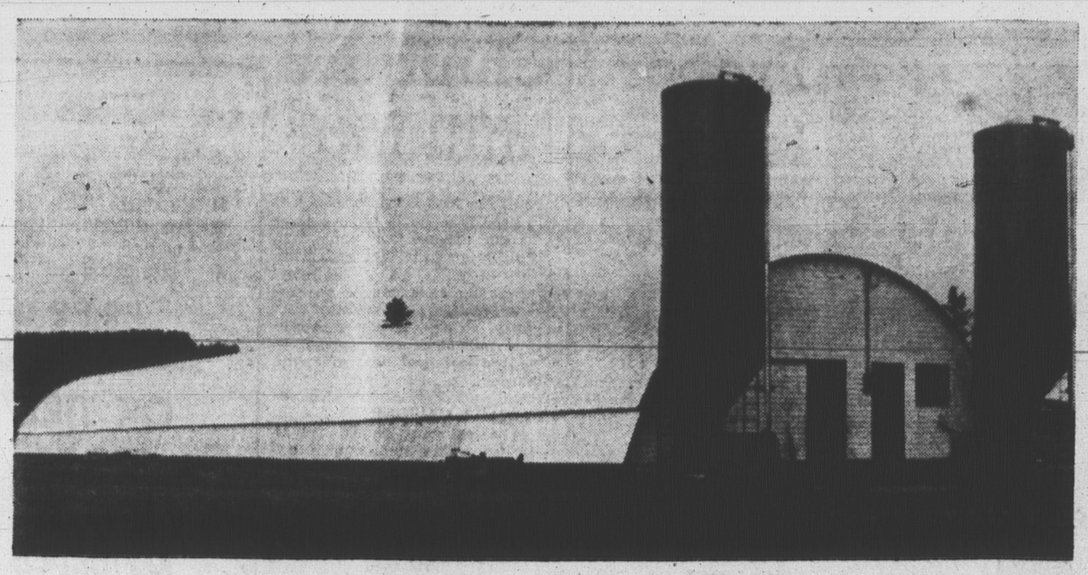
Yield of trimmed cuts will be calculated from a number of carcass measurements: length, total backfat thickness, loin area, per cent of ham of carcass per cent of lean in ham face, and warm carcass weight.

Four pigs from each litter are still required for testing. But because the new system provides correction factors for sex differences in carcass measurements, it is no longer necessary that there be two males and two females.

The regulation setting a minimum size of litter have been dropped. Previously pigs entered for testing had to come from a litter of at least eight by a sow and six by a gilt.

Occurrence of a ridling, hemophrodite or ruptured pig will no longer mean disqualification from testing of the others in the litter. However, the four pigs delivered to the test station must be sound and free of the abnormalities.

In another change, the age limit for completion of testing has been reduced to 200 days from 220.



THE JUDSON-JONES HOG BARN AT ALEXANDRA

Employ great care when soil sampling

By A.W. HUMPHREY

Soil testing provides a sound basis for a fertility program. If the nitrogen, phosphate, potash and pH levels of a field have been determined by a soil test, then amounts of manure, commercial fertilizer and limestone can be recommended with more confidence.

A laboratory test, however, is no better than the soil sample and the soil sample no better than the manner in which it was collected. Therefore, it is important that the soil sample be collected properly and that it be representative of the area to be tested, otherwise, the recommendations will not be as accurate as they could be.

WHEN TO SAMPLE

Fall sampling is recommended for spring sown crops. This will allow several months for analyses of the soil samples and will ensure the grower of receiving the test results and recommendations before lime and fertilizer treatment is required in the spring. Samples sent to the laboratory in the spring run the risk of being delayed in the spring rush of testing and therefore there is the risk of results not being out by the time fertilizer should be purchased.

CONTAINERS FOR SOIL SAMPLES

The P.E.I. Department of Agriculture supplies soil sample boxes and questionnaire forms free of charge. These may be obtained through any staff member of the P.E.I. Dept. of Agriculture, the Soil Advisory Laboratory or from Fertilizer Companies.

HOW TO TAKE SOIL SAMPLES

1. Assign identification numbers to all fields to be sampled. Use digits only in numbering your samples, for example, 1, 2, 3, ... etc. Do not use letters A, B, C... etc.

2. Sample each field which you intend to treat with lime or fertilizer.

3. Single samples of the field are of little or no value. Each sample submitted for testing should be a composite or mixture of 20 to 30 samplings (borings) well distributed over the field or area.

4. Two or more composite samples of the same field are necessary only if:
(a) the soil differs in appearance
(b) areas have been fertilized, limed or manured differently
(c) sections have been under different crops

5. Avoid taking the sample from the fertilizer band when sampling in row crops. Avoid any unusual spots such as old fence rows or road-beds, or where lime, fertilizer or manure has been piled or spilled. Also, avoid small areas that are much different from the rest of the field, if desirable these areas can be sampled separately.

6. Soils may be sampled with a clean sampling probe or a spade. The sampling probe is the easier method on moist soils which are relatively stone-free— These probes are now available at cost through the Department of Agriculture.

7. Samples should be taken to plough depth (app. 6") on cultivated fields and 3" to 4" on sod.

8. The composite sample borings should be placed in a clean bucket and mixed thoroughly to break up any lumps or clods.

9. The soil sample should then be transfered to the soil sample box, taking a little from different sections of the bucket until the sample box is filled.

10. Label the box with your name, address and sample number.

11. Fill out the spaces on the "Soil Sampling Questionnaire" and enclose a completed questionnaire with each soil sample box. The answer to these questions are for guidance in interpreting the soil test results and help greatly when making recommendations.

12. Keep a record for yourself of the area from which the samples were taken. One way is to make a rough sketch or map of the sampled areas.

13. Return the soil samples and completed questionnaires to the SOIL ADVISORY LABORATORY, EXPERIMENTAL FARM PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND.

Birdsfoot trefoil and its production

Earlier this year Ontario held their annual meeting of the Soil and Crop Improvement Association. One of the talks given was on the production of Birdsfoot Trefoil. The name - Management for Higher Yields. These are some of the comments Mr. Winch had on Birdsfoot Trefoil.

It is true that when alfalfa and trefoil are grown under proper conditions, the alfalfa will produce more feed per acre than will trefoil. We then ask ourselves, why then are we growing trefoil. The reason is that of these two legumes, alfalfa and trefoil, trefoil is the one that offers the most versatility. It is versatile in its use as pasture or as stored feed and unlike alfalfa in this respect it is tolerant to a wide range of soil drainage conditions. As a result of this thinking, trefoil and trefoil mixtures have been used on problem soils; on soils that are too rough or are too poorly drained for alfalfa.

Trefoil will produce for 3, 4 and perhaps 5 times longer than will alfalfa. For this reason trefoil is being grown in well drained land as well as in poorly drained land for permanent pasture and also for hay and silage.

As I mentioned earlier trefoil is a lower yielder than alfalfa for the first two or three years. However, these yields often obtained are not the fault of the legume but are a direct result of the methods used in establishing the crop.

The aim in establishing trefoil should be to have a dense vigorous stand of plants by September of the seeding year. There are four factors involved in good establishment: early spring seeding; adequate fertility proper inoculation; and the removal of competition from other legume crop, weeds and companion crops.

In other words when seeding trefoil, never mix it with any other legume such as alsike clover. Only grasses should be included in the seed mixture.

Timothy has been found to be the one grass that, when mixed with trefoil, will result in a high yield. However, when more than 4 pounds of this grass is added to the mixture, trefoil plants can be crowded out.

The use of other grasses such as bromegrass, reed canary and especially orchardgrass should be avoided. Mr. Winch stressed the importance of a companion crop. He said that a companion crop such as oats provides too much competition for the young trefoil plants and as a result the trefoil plants are stunted and will not develop until the companion crop, is removed. Because of the companion crop the young trefoil plants do not have moisture or time to develop into a robust, healthy plant before winter. This results in winter-killing and poor yield in the first crop year.

Mr. Winch said that the direct method of seeding (this is seeding without a companion crop) has resulted in heavy stands of vigorous trefoil plants in September of the seeding year.

After the trefoil is established, the yield will depend on the soil fertility and harvesting practice. Trefoil is regarded as a legume that doesn't need much fertility to produce. However, increased yields will result from applications of fertilizer.