PROFITS IN SWINE IN WISCONSIN.

David Imrie, Roberts, Wis.

Establishing the Herd.

So long as the packers pay as much for the lard hog as for the bacon type, I am going to produce the fat-backed kind, as they are produced cheaper where we can raise corn as we can in Wisconsin.

There are four breeds of this type that are very popular: the Poland China, Berkshire, Duroc Jersey and Chester White. You can select from these and make no mistake.

After you have decided on your breed, do not make hash of it by breeding for a few years in one line and then switching over to another breed, as every time you change you commence again with half-breeds.

Cross bred hogs make pork as cheaply as any, but this necessitates the buying of your breeding stock, as some of your sows will not prove as good as you would like to have them.

Never use anything but a pure bred sire, so the little fellows may be well born.

I like old sows better than young ones (by old sows I mean two years or older), as their pigs are stronger and grow faster and they usually have larger litters; you are not so apt to get the sows off their feed by heavy feeding as with the young sow, and it takes no more feed to winter an old sow than a young one.

When the Young Pigs Come.

Be on hand when the little fellows come and see that everything is all right, then go away and let them alone for twenty-four hours.

Feed lightly at first, increasing it gradually for a week or ten days, until you have her on a full ration, giv-
ing her all she will eat up clean three times a day.

The little pigs are better when fed through the dam, rather than being obliged to eat too early on the side. Get them out on the ground as soon as possible, if it is dry.

As soon as they begin to eat, see that they have some feed for themselves in a separate pen or yard; some sweet skimmed milk and soaked corn makes an excellent dish. Let them have a good clover pasture with this and they ought to grow and thrive.

In the absence of clover, perhaps a seeding of barley, sown four bushels per acre, with about three or four pounds of dwarf Essex rape seed and ten or twelve pounds of clover seed, would make the next best pasture, but you will need a larger acreage than if you have a clover pasture.

As a rule, we never wean our pigs, letting them follow their dams until the dams dry up. If we intend to breed some of the sows for fall litters, we will have to wean the pigs.

In doing so, shut up the sows (not the pigs). In this way the sows dry up easier and the pigs mind it less.

**Fitting For Market.**

We want to get the pigs on the market as soon as possible weighing two hundred pounds or more, as the price is usually better early in the fall.

I have never found a better way to feed in the fall than to "hog" off a piece of corn, having sown some rape at the last cultivation, and having some pumpkins and squash in the corn also, feeding some soaked ground barley in connection, and letting them have access to drinking water at all times. Of course you lose the corn fodder, but we think the loss is over-balanced by the saving in labor, as this is a very busy season—silos to fill and corn to cut and shock—and I have never been able to make hogs do better with any system of feeding I ever tried.

As a rule, we do not shut up our hogs to fatten them, unless it is a few weeks at the last. When they are shut up, see to it that they have wood ashes and salt in a self-feeder, so they can have all they want.

There are certain months in the year in which you can make pork cheaper than at any other time. These months are September, October and November and again in April, May and the first weeks in June. The fall months are the best, as the weather is ideal, so we should take advantage of this and get all the growth possible at this time.

Fall pigs can be fattened in the spring months and put upon the market in June, usually bringing a good price.

For the young man just starting on his farm with a small capital, I know of no better way to make a start than to go into the hog business and then breed and feed and care for them right and he is certain to succeed.

**DISCUSSION.**

Mr. Christman—Is there any object in having all the pigs born at the same time?

Mr. Imrie—Yes, it requires less labor at farrowing time, they feed better together and they sell better together, if they are all about one size. If there is very much variation in size, they should be separated in the pasture to have good results, and most farmers have not the pasture in which to separate them.

Mr. John Imrie—Is the question of having two litters a year influenced somewhat by the manner you suggest of hogging off corn? Won't those mothers and the little fellows get too much corn unless you have conveniences so you can keep them separate.

Mr. Imrie—As a rule, we raise very few fall pigs, some years a few and
other years none, but just as Mr. Imrie said, it will interfere unless you have different fields for them. Ideal conditions for these fall pigs and their mothers would be in an oat or barley field where it has been seeded to clover, if you have that field so fenced that you can turn them in there and let them have the oats, they pick up the oats from the ground, and if you have a considerable acreage of oats there is enough to keep these sows for three or four weeks at least. They won’t hurt the young clover, they pick up the oats and barley and in that way the pigs will grow and the sows will be in perfect condition. 

Mr. Convey—Do you attach any importance to having hogs ready for market at any particular time in the season? 

Mr. Imrie—No, I never wait for the market. When they are ready we sell them. We can never tell whether the market is going up or down. This year we sold later than common, on account of the small number of hogs we had, and the amount of feed we had, and we wanted to make them just as heavy as we could, so we fed longer than usual. 

Mr. Convey—Don’t you find it profitable to avoid the general rush for market? 

Mr. Imrie—Yes, it would be better to get them on the market earlier,—along about New Year’s usually the price drops, because everybody is putting hogs on the market. If you could put them on the market early in the season, you would get a better price, as a rule. 

Mr. Scribner—What system have you of marking your pigs to tell which are from the best sows? 

Mr. Imrie—We use ear marks. These are litter marks, that is, all in that litter have the same mark, one ear mark in the lower right and another in the lower left and upper right and upper left, and so on, and then when we use them for breeders we put ear tags in their ears. (We use the Dana ear tag.) I find the little pigs will lose these ear tags, but if you wait until about breeding time, till fall, and then put the ear tags in, they stay pretty well. I find it is a great deal better not to excite and frighten the sows when putting in the tags. Take a gate and fasten it to a wall or side of the pen, spread the other end out from the wall, drive your sow in there and have a man pinch that sow behind the gate, then you put your hand through the gate and just punch the hole and put the tag in, there is no fighting with the animal and it is easily done. 

Mr. Jacobs—Isn’t it asking a good deal of the soil to grow a heavy crop of corn, a crop of rape and a crop of pumpkins all at the same time? 

Mr. Imrie—It will do it on hog pastures. 

Mr. Martiny—What type of hog do you prefer as the best feeder? 

Mr. Imrie—I want a good growthy fellow, a good vigorous hog. I don’t like a little, fine-boned, pretty fellow, but one of more vigorous growth. That is not saying they must be coarse. Our sows are getting too fine, is a complaint we hear from many people, they want something coarse; they say; but really they do not want a coarse hog at all, it is not profitable to raise a hog of that kind. They want a strong, vigorous hog. 

Mr. Jacobs—I saw a razor-backed hog that looked as vigorous as anything in the hog line I ever saw, but he didn’t suit me. 

Mr. Imrie—He was a bacon hog, probably. 

Mr. Roberts—You are not advocating eleven hundred-pound hogs? 

Mr. Imrie—No, I am not, though I would like to have a lot of them that weigh eleven hundred pounds just now. 

Mr. Roberts—But the strong, medium type is the most profitable. 

Mr. Imrie—Yes, it is. 

A Member—What do you think of barley, oats and peas for hog feed?
Mr. Imrie—Peas are almost too expensive by the time you get them fed. Barley is all right, if you can raise it cheap enough, barley makes very good feed. We grind it and soak it usually, and feed it to them as slop in connection with corn. I have never fattened hogs on barley alone, we have always had corn. Split peas at a cent a pound would be all right. Down here at Cedar Grove a man had split beans and peas at eighteen dollars a ton, and it makes the cheapest feed I know of. I suppose the beans would be better cooked. The peas could be soaked or fed dry. If I could have the split peas, I would feed split peas and some barley to my brood sows and that would make an excellent feed. Sometimes I am asked the question in regard to raising fall pigs so as to have them to feed the milk to. I never had results that were so good as when the sows got milk.

Mr. Matteson—How about feeding clover hay or alfalfa hay to brood sows?

Mr. Imrie—It is all right. We have fed clover chaff and with this alfalfa hay as you grow it in the eastern part of the state, I don’t know anything better. Just put it in racks and let them eat it from the racks. We do not feed our sows much corn. They get whole oats in the morning; at noon they get ground barley and some-ground oats, ground together in a slop. At night they get some corn, about one-third of the ration of corn. You cannot have good results if you feed your sows largely on corn in the winter.

Mr. Martiny—Perhaps you would have just as many pigs per litter if you fed on corn as on peas, but if you keep it up generation after generation, you will certainly have bad results.

Mr. Imrie—Yes, they would lack in vigor.

Mr. Convey—And I would hardly expect as many pigs, that is, I would expect a smaller number as well as a poorer quality.

Mr. Roberts—I have fed alfalfa cut finely, fed in the form of a slop, and I like it very much.

Mr. Imrie—I think one reason for expecting larger litters is to have the breeding stock at mating time in perfect condition. Feed them the best you know how before this time so they are in perfect health and vigor, strong. You will get larger litters than if they were fed on corn.

Mr. Scribner—Is it possible to overdo that matter of feeding, give them too much protein?

Mr. Imrie—It may be possible, but it is not probable that any one in Wisconsin will do that.

Mr. John Imrie—I think these litters would be not only smaller in number, but you would not be able to save anywhere near as large a percentage if the sows were fed on corn as compared with the results if they were fed properly. In other words, not only would the pigs be weaker and fewer in number, but they wouldn’t stay with you.

Music by the orchestra.