Livestock Producers' Profits Can Be Increased by Careful Handling of Animals

Farmers and ranchers expend a great amount of feed, money, and effort in producing meat in the form of cattle, hogs, and sheep; but between the time the animals are readied for market and the time they are delivered to the packers, extensive losses usually are sustained. Part of these losses result from damage to livestock which occurs in handling and hauling; other losses result from shrinkage.

In an article under the same title as above, the autumn issue of The Farm Quarterly presents clearly the problem of handling livestock in marketing and points out some of the ways in which the farmer or rancher can meet his responsibility in reducing losses. In reviewing the problem of shrinkage, the magazine cites a Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station study in which some 2,000 head of cattle, weighed both before and after a trip of about 650 miles to the stockyards, lost an average of 131 pounds per head in transit. The animals regained some 56 pounds of the loss within 5 hours after arrival, but there was still a lot of lost weight for which the farmer was not paid. Some loss from shrinkage is inevitable where livestock must be hauled a long distance to market, but a number of steps can be taken to reduce shrinkage losses. Among the most important are feeding and watering the animals periodically while en route. Another, equally helpful, is the maintenance of conditions of reasonable comfort for the livestock.

A kind of loss that can be reduced greatly appears in the form of bruised, crippled, and killed animals. This loss, says The Farm Quarterly, amounts to many millions of dollars worth of meat each year. The bruising of animals causes the biggest part of the loss, but dead and crippled animals make a substantial contribution to the waste. In a study made some months ago by Wilson and Company it was found that almost two-thirds of the bruises inflicted upon cattle in transit were caused by crowding, bumping, rushing; around 18 percent were caused by trampling; 9 percent were man-made with whip, cane, or club; and 5 percent were caused by horns. In a study of the handling of hogs an examination of carcasses disclosed that 40 percent of the bruises were caused by irate handlers using canes or clubs; 20 percent were caused by kicking or prodding; 17 percent resulted from crowding and trampling; 11 percent were inflicted by pitchforks, nails, or other puncturing implements; a very small percentage were due to falls on slippery flooring and icy runways; and the remainder, presumably due to a miscellany of causes which were unavoidable.

Railroads, meat packers, and the consuming public absorb part of this loss, but it is the farmer who bears the greater part because the livestock remain his property until the deal is closed with the buyer. If livestock hauled by truck are killed or injured in transit or in the yards, the farmer may recover their value provided the trucker carries insurance. Railroads generally carry no insurance but pay damages themselves. Overloading on either truck or railroad car, of course, jeopardizes collection of damages. If the livestock are bruised or are in bad condition when they arrive at the market, the producer takes an immediate loss by receiving lower bids on his stock. These points emphasize the importance of safe loading and of dealing with reliable carriers.
All of the bruised meat, along with the broken bones and the torn meat around them, is condemned by the veterinarian inspectors. This meat and the animals that arrive at the market dead are put in the inedible tank and converted into commercial, inedible grease and tankage, and this loss is reflected in the lower bids buyers make on all livestock. An increase in the number of dead and crippled animals that arrive at the yard will be reflected also in higher insurance rates which all farmers will pay when they buy insurance.

But how can these losses be reduced? One of the surest ways is to have a good, substantial loading chute with cleated or rough cement flooring to prevent slipping. The chute should be located where the truck can get to it without too much difficulty and should be connected to a holding pen. In that way, the farmer can gather the animals an hour or so before the truck is due and they can quiet down before they are marched up the chute. Truckers point out that good loading chutes are necessary for successful loading of livestock but that relatively few farms have them.

Having a good chute is a great help, but there still may be problems involved in getting an animal to walk up the chute into the truck. When tempers flare, there usually are too many damaging implements handy to use on an obstinate animal. Pitchforks, chains, whips, and clubs used to move the animal lower the price of his carcass. Therefore, a second step in reducing losses is to secure a canvas slapper, which has a reed handle and a double layer of heavy canvas attached that produces a stinging slap and makes a stubborn animal move but does not damage the meat. It has been approved by humane societies, and livestock men are advised to keep several around so that they will be used instead of heavier implements. Spokesmen for humane societies are divided in their opinions on the electric prod but usually will sanction its use if the voltage is kept low.

When shipping by rail, the farmer signs a contract and arranges with the local freight agent for the type of car he needs for shipping his animals. The railroads do their best to supply cars in good repair, but as a third step toward reducing losses, it is worth while for the shipper to inspect the car to see that there are no nails or bolts in a position to claw at his stock, that the floor is in good condition, and that the walls are prepared for the kind of weather the stock must endure—plenty of ventilation in the summer, papered over in the winter to protect them from freezing. It is the shipper's responsibility to put bedding on the floor; however, if the shipper prefers, the railroad will supply bedding and charge him for it. A layer of sharp sand helps in preventing slipping and should always be used. In the winter the sand can be topped with a good layer of straw for greater warmth.

The greatest damage to livestock in transit occurs in poorly equipped trucks operated by careless handlers. The average loss on dead and crippled animals is much greater in truck than in rail shipments. The reasons, according to the National Livestock Loss Prevention Board, seem to be (1) too much overcrowding to get a paying load, (2) fast driving on rough roads, around sharp curves, at corners, and over hills, and (3) lack of partitions in mixed loads.

In hauling livestock by any method it is essential that proper air circulation be obtained. In the winter, cold blasts will cause hogs, for instance, to pile up for warmth and some of them will smother. On the other hand, too little air circulating through the load can be equally disastrous. Farmers have found that hauling hogs in a tight-walled, grain bed truck also can be fatal, even though the top is open. Getting sufficient air through the bottom deck of double-deck trucks is another serious problem, which must be worked out on an individual case basis. Attention to these problems, as well as to all the minor details involved in shipping livestock to market, will add to the farmer's income and will benefit carriers, packers, and consumers.

FARM MANAGEMENT

Hog Producers Advised to Guard Against Swine Flu

The weather during this season of the year—warm days and cold nights—is favorable
for the development of flu among hogs, according to W. C. Banks, extension veterinarian of Texas A. & M. College. The disease is seldom fatal, but it causes hogs to lose weight. Furthermore, gilts that are being kept for brood sows may be affected by flu in such a manner that small, weak litters are obtained. The best prevention, says Dr. Banks, is to protect hogs from the elements by providing them with a well-bedded shed that is clean and has plenty of ventilation. It will be necessary to check to see that the hogs use the shelter, however, because they probably will prefer to stay outside.

Hog flu sometimes is not easily distinguished from other ailments, and whenever there is any doubt about the diagnosis a veterinarian should be called. Hogs that have flu should be provided with a comfortable house that is free from drafts and should be fed on a light, slightly laxative diet. Prompt and proper attention for the ailing animals is the best way to keep them in the best of condition, says Dr. Banks.

Udder Veins and Abdominal Milk Wells
Not Real Sign of Cow’s Capacity
The “milk veins” and “milk wells” on a dairy cow’s abdomen and the network of surface veining on the udder apparently have little or nothing to do with her ability to produce large quantities of milk, according to a report recently issued by the Department of Agriculture. Research specialists of the Bureau of Dairy Industry compared the milk-production records of 195 cows (106 Holsteins and 89 Jerseys), with grades assigned to represent abundance of veining on the udder surface, the size and length of abdominal veins, and size of milk wells. They found no significant relationship between any of these mammary characteristics and the milk-producing capacity of the cows.

Important to Use Good, Clean Milk Cans
Milk cans that are badly battered and in poor condition are one of the weak links in the chain between the farmer and the milk plant, says A. M. Meekma, assistant extension dairy husbandman of Texas A. & M. College. Dents and crevices in old cans tend to harbor and furnish breeding places for bacteria, while rust spots may cause the milk or cream to have a metallic flavor. Faulty milk cans lower the quality of milk and often render it unfit for use, thus reducing the farmer’s income.

Good daily care of milk cans will pay dividends, and Mr. Meekma offers some suggestions on how best to do the job. Use a recommended washing solution and do a thorough job of washing. Rinse well and invert the cans on a good rack that permits thorough draining. Leave the lids off empty cans. Be careful in using the stirring rod—it is easy to scratch the inside of the can; remove the rod after stirring has been finished. Try to avoid leaving sour milk or cream in a can over an extended period of time, because it makes the washing job more difficult and may affect the metallic coating on the can.

Crowding Hens Unprofitable
The poultryman who stocks his laying houses with no more than the recommended maximum number of pullets and sells the extra ones will be money ahead, says W. J. Moore, associate extension poultry husbandman of Texas A. & M. College. Too many hens in the laying house can cause trouble, he says, because ventilation systems may be ineffective when the house is overcrowded. The result is too much moisture in the air, damp litter, and wet walls — generally unhealthy conditions. The birds are more likely to be troubled with diseases, which will cause a reduction in the eggs produced.

According to Mr. Moore, there is a definite relationship between the floor space provided and potential egg production; 3 to 4 square feet of floor space should be allowed for each bird in a well-equipped house. If there is overcrowding, sufficient feeding space will not be available and the hens cannot get enough feed to produce at maximum levels. At least 6 inches of feeder space per hen are recommended.

There should be at least one nest for every 5 hens in the house, and poultrymen are
cautioned to supply plenty of good, fresh, clean drinking water for the hens. One hundred hens will drink about 5 gallons of water per day. If the little items in poultry management are observed and taken care of, says Mr. Moore, the hens will respond by producing during the season when egg prices are highest.

**FARM PRICES**

1950 Potato Price Support Program Announced

A 1950 price support program for Irish potatoes, which continues price support at the 60-percent-of-parity level in effect this year and which sets a lower national commercial acreage allotment of 1,137,800 acres for 1950, was announced recently by the Department of Agriculture. These steps, taken in recognition of decreased potato consumption and increased yields per acre, are designed to effect a better balance between potato production and requirements. On the basis of data now available, the average support price for Irish potatoes in 1950 will be $1.60 per hundredweight (about 96 cents per bushel). The support price cannot be less than this figure and may be slightly above it, depending on the actual parity level on January 1, 1950, on which the support price will be based. The average support price for 1949-crop potatoes was $1.80 per hundredweight (about $1.08 per bushel).

**TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS**

Cotton Sprayed Successfully in 1949 Tests

Field tests conducted by the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station during 1949 indicate that it is possible to use sprays as well as dusts in controlling boll weevils, bollworms, and other cotton insects, according to Progress Report 1192 issued by the Station. This makes it possible to apply cotton insecticides when a moderate breeze is blowing, which means that they can be applied when needed and during the day. Spraying toxaphene or a mixture of toxaphene and DDT at 60 pounds of pressure, the success of control of insects as determined by yield data was about the same as with toxaphene-sulphur dusts, though the sprays were applied at a lower rate. Sprays were applied at about 7½ gallons (from 1.1 to 2.9 pounds of active ingredients) per acre. Similar tests conducted in Oklahoma obtained comparable results.

New Peach Varieties

Research workers at state and federal experiment stations in many parts of the Nation are trying to develop new varieties of fruit that will out-produce and yield more desirable fruit than the varieties now commonly grown. They have produced a number of outstanding new peach varieties, some of which have been tested by the Texas Agricultural Experiment Stations at Stephenville and Lindale.

Tests made at Stephenville showed that a new variety called Dixigem is very good. John Hutchinson, associate horticulturist of Texas A. & M. College, says it is a yellow freestone fruit of fine texture and good quality. The skin has a rich red blush with a yellow base. It ripens 4 to 5 weeks before the Elberta.

Next in order of ripening is a new peach known as the Dixired. It is not as large as the Dixigem but is most attractive in appearance. The trees tend to overbear, and for this reason they should be thinned early in the spring to enable fruit left to attain full size.

A comparatively new variety which has been tested thoroughly throughout most of the State is Halehaven. It is a yellow freestone, and the trees are unusually vigorous. In central Texas it ripens from mid-June to early July.

Improvements have been made on the Elberta, and the new strain is known as the Sullivan Elberta. The improvement has added extra color and a slight tendency for the fruit to ripen earlier than the standard type. The Frank variety is not new, but it is good if a grower wants peaches ripening into August. It is a yellow, clingstone peach that can be used for pickling and preserving and is also a good peach to use fresh.

These varieties will furnish fruit through the summer season and are recommended for central, east, and north Texas.