



AGRICULTURAL NEWS OF THE WEEK

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L I V E S T O C K

Reports from livestock markets last week indicate that prices of cows and grass-fed steers were somewhat weak, while other cattle held relatively steady, although stocker trade was somewhat uncertain. In Fort Worth, Good and Choice slaughter steers and yearlings brought \$18.00 to \$24.00 while Common and Medium grass-fed steers sold from \$11.00 to \$17.00. Fat cows were reported at \$9.50 to \$12.00, a few up to \$12.50. Canners and cutters sold as high as \$9.50. Good and Choice slaughter calves sold generally at \$14.00 to \$17.50 with a few up to \$18.00.

Good and Choice fed spring lambs were marketed in Fort Worth last week at \$17.00 to \$21.00, while Choice clipped lambs brought \$21.00.

Butcher hogs declined steadily last week, closing \$1.00 lower at a top price of \$25.00. On Monday of this week hogs regained about 50 cents.

The latest weekly USDA meat production report shows that meat production under Federal Inspection for the week ended August 22 was estimated at 329 million pounds, or 11 percent more than in the corresponding week a year ago. These figures illustrate the current high level of meat production in this country.

In this same week, arrival of the first sizable contingent of grass cattle at markets this season and continued liberal marketings of fed offerings combined to produce the largest weekly cattle slaughter since the one week in October 1946 following removal of price controls. Slaughter of calves was the largest for any week since November 1949.

The Department of Agriculture bought 11.6 million pounds of beef in the week ended August 24, bringing the total purchased to relieve cattlemen in the drought-stricken Southwest to 68.2 million pounds. The week's purchase consisted of hamburger and canned beef.

In looking ahead at probable trends in livestock prices for the remainder of this year, USDA economists have predicted that higher grade cattle likely will continue to show the most price strength, since slaughter supplies are expected to drop near or to the level of a year ago. Seasonally larger supplies, limited outlets for lower grade beef, and weakening demand from feeders will tend to hold down prices of lower grade cattle. Hog prices thus far, though declining seasonally, probably will stay higher than a year ago.

W O O L A N D M O H A I R

There were numerous purchases of Good French Combing and staple 12-months wool reported in Texas last week at a minimum of \$1.76, clean basis, delivered to Boston, according to PMA. Eight-months wool sold from \$1.65 to \$1.70 and fall Texas wool from \$1.50 to \$1.55, clean basis.

The mohair market in Texas continues relatively quiet. Buyers are offering 75 cents for adult and \$1.00 for kid mohair out of the fall clip, but few sales are being made.

Auctions reopening the 1953-54 selling season in Australia began on Monday of this week. Some prices were about 5 percent above those of the previous sales held in early July.

The Department of Agriculture has reduced selling prices as much as 12 percent on some of the lower grades of wool it has in storage. The new price policy will put many qualities of wool in line with current market quotations. The CCC has about 100,000,000 pounds of wool acquired under the 1952 price support program.

P O U L T R Y

Texas turkey growers are raising 3.4 million turkeys this year compared with 3.7 million last year. Although the 1953 crop is 8 percent smaller than a year ago, it is 15 percent larger than the average for the 5 years 1948-52. Farmers of the Nation likewise are raising 8 percent less turkeys than in 1952.

Louisiana growers are raising 122,000 turkeys this year, the same as last year.

An industry advisory committee has told the Secretary of Agriculture that a Government turkey purchasing program will not be needed this year, since the smaller production is expected to lead to prices equal to or higher than those of last year.

Texas broiler markets are holding relatively steady although over the past month or so prices have eased downward about 1 cent or 2 cents. Closing prices last week were mostly 27 cents to 28 cents. Year ago prices were 32 cents to 33 cents.

M I S C E L L A N E O U S

Although weather conditions over the Southwest for the past week or 10 days have been variable they have, for the most part, favored the cotton crop. The crop is making good progress in most sections, although rainfall has been excessive in some localities and the cool, damp weather is favoring insect and worm infestation.

The spot cotton market is holding about steady. Merchants are buying mainly for current needs. Producers are holding on to their new cotton; through August 21, producers in Texas had placed only 30,675 bales under loan.

Domestic mill consumption of cotton dropped off more than usual in July, averaging 29,600 bales per working day, compared with 37,100 bales per working day in June.

Provisions of the 1954 wheat allotment and marketing quota program have been amended to afford better protection for land in the winter wheat wind-erosion areas of Western states. Producers in these areas who have excess land prepared for wheat will be permitted to seed such acreage to wheat for use as green manure, cover crop, and hay. The acreage must be turned under, pastured off, or cut for hay or silage while still green.

The August issue of Federal Reserve Bulletin, with an article on "The Balance Sheet of Agriculture, 1953," reports that declining farm commodity prices last year were accompanied by a decrease of 2 percent in value of assets of agriculture in the United States. All the decline occurred in two items - farm real estate and livestock on farms - which together fell \$6.1 billion. This decline was partly offset by increases in other assets. Farm debts increased \$1.4 billion, or 10 percent. The combined effect of decreased assets and increased debts, says the Bulletin, was to reduce the equity of owners by \$4.7 billion, or about 3 percent.

The USDA index of prices received by farmers declined 1 point during the month ended August 15. At 258 percent of the 1910-14 average, the index was 13 percent below a year earlier. The index of prices paid by farmers remained unchanged during the month.

W. M. Pritchett
Agricultural Economist