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1948 Livestock AND Feed OUTLOOK

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We must do our utmost to conserve food and feed grains this year. Cereals are needed for human food, at home and abroad, and for feeding the livestock which in turn supply additional food. Good livestock management and good citizenship both call for avoiding waste—the world needs the grain and the margin in feeding makes good management imperative.

If these economies in feeding are to be effective they must be applied especially to livestock using the most feed. In Minnesota hogs use nearly half of all the concentrates fed. Chickens take nearly a fifth, milk cows about a sixth. Feeding operations for these three great groups will need to be especially studied if the savings are to meet the needs.

LOOKING AHEAD




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LIVESTOCK TRENDS

Cattle numbers in the United States increased from 1938 to 1944, encouraged by good prices and by good feed supplies, but have been declining since. Dairy cattle numbers are declining, but not as much as beef.

Hog numbers have been high during and following the war—53 million spring pigs saved in 1947 and 52 million in 1946, as compared to the 42-million average, 1935-1939. Prices have been good and feed has been ample.

Numbers of hens are down from the war peak but are still above the 1935-1939 average. However, the number of eggs laid per hen has been steadily rising for years, indicating a larger use of feed per hen.

Horse and mule numbers continue to decline. The number of sheep has been declining since early in the war.

The United States is still short of fats and oils but the supply has been increasing since 1945. The 1948 supply may be about the same as 1947. Animal fats, especially lard, may be less, but the 1947 production of vegetable-oil crops is higher. Importations of copra and coconut oil are increasing.

EFFECT OF FEED SHORTAGE

Livestock feeding will have to be reduced. There just isn't enough to feed as liberally as usual. Severe culling of poultry and livestock early this winter and marketing pigs earlier and lighter will mean (1) lower livestock prices early in the year and higher prices later and (2) a less severe shortage of feed grain next spring and summer.

If culling is not severe and early and hogs are sold heavier, feed scarcities may be acute by spring in places and distress selling of livestock may occur.

Although small grains are important, they do not go far in relieving the shortage of corn. On the average, corn represents about 60 per cent of the feed grain supply for Minnesota, oats 30 per cent, barley 9 per cent, wheat and rye 1 per cent. At 1947 fall prices, these small grains are all higher priced, on a feed-value basis, than corn for fattening livestock.

What's Ahead for Livestock?

HOGS

Winter feeding and the following year's pig crop are both influenced by the corn crop. Most 1947 spring pigs and all the 1947 fall pigs have to be fed out of 1947 corn. Due to a smaller corn crop, hogs marketed in the winter and spring of 1947-1948 will probably average lighter than usual. Many fall pigs which would normally have been carried well into the spring may be put on the market earlier than usual and at lighter weights.

The 1947 spring pig crop was only about 1½ per cent larger than 1946. With a probable lighter-average sale weight the total pork supply from the 1947 spring pigs is expected to be less than a year earlier.

As for the 1947 fall pig crop, farmers reported in early June that they intended to keep 9 per cent more sows for fall farrowing than in 1946. Conditions have changed, however, so that probably the fall pig crop will be much smaller than indicated in June.

The number of pigs born in the spring of 1948 and the time of farrowing will both be influenced by the corn situation. Many farmers who normally have sows farrow in February or March may postpone farrowing till May or even June in order to use 1948 corn. This may be a good shift for many to make. However, gilts born in May or June of 1948 cannot be bred early enough to farrow in February or March of 1949. Following a late-farrowing spring, it takes about two years to get back into position for early pigs again. A few good sows may be bred for early farrowing to supply early gilts for 1949.

BEEF

Cattle numbers have been decreasing in the United States since 1944, and the pattern of cattle slaughter this year is worth studying.

The cattle industry is marketing, for slaughter, about 50 per cent more cattle and calves this year than the average of 1936-1941. Cattle numbers January 1, 1947, however, were only 20 per cent over pre-war years. That means that the heavy slaughter this year is dipping heavily into the reserves of cattle normally carried for further growth, replacements, and expansion.

During the first seven months of 1947, the number of steers slaughtered under federal inspection was nearly 62 per cent of the total steers in the United States on January 1, 1947. This is a much higher proportion than ever recorded before. Moreover, this year's steers have averaged the lightest since separate steer weight records were started in 1938. This year they have averaged nearly 50 pounds lighter than last year.

Both breeders and feeders will want to watch the sale of cows and heifers for slaughter. Heifer slaughter has been high this year, and sales of cows for slaughter, which usually occur mainly in the fall, have been greater than usual during the summer. If this rate of slaughter continues, the number of cattle in the United States on January 1, 1948, will be four or five million head less than a year earlier, or about 76 or 77 million. This would be about what we had in 1941 and nine million head less than the 1944 peak. Consumer demand and the high prices he is willing to pay are cutting into cattle supplies very sharply.

With a short corn crop and reduced supplies of feeders, fewer cattle will be fed this winter than last. Those kept will be fed at high costs and will need good selling prices to show a profit. What kind of prices will be paid at market time is anybody's guess. On the supply side, however, meat supplies during the summer and fall of 1948 probably will be below 1947.

Using Roughage for Feeder Cattle

Many farmers have plenty of hay this winter and that may help the feed situation. For the man with his own calves, this is no special problem. He should gain all the weight he can on roughage. For the man who proposes to buy cattle to use this roughage even though he is short of corn, the situation is different.

HOW MUCH FEED IS THERE?

From 1942 through 1946 both total feed supplies and amount per head of livestock were much above prewar. For 1947-1948, however, the feed supply is back to the 1936-1941 average.

Table 1. Supply and Use of Feed Grains, United States

	Five-year average			
	Oct. 1, 1936- Sept. 30, 1941	Oct. 1, 1941, Sept. 30, 1946	1946- 1947	1947- 1948
	Millions of tons			
Net supply, concentrates	136.4	160.5	162.6	138.5
Feed grains for seed, human food, industry, and export	11.8	13.4	18.7	18.5*
Stocks at end of year	19.9	14.4	15.5	10.0*
Fed to livestock	105.6	132.8	128.4	110.0
Concentrates used for feed per animal unit, ton .....	.79	.86	.93	.81

* Assumed.

Calves or yearlings bought in the fall or early winter, roughed through the winter on legume hay and corn silage, then carried through the summer on good pasture plus a bushel of corn per head per week, go into the feed lot in the fall with plenty of size and ready for good gains. But note that some corn is used, both summer and winter, to get profitable growth. Also pastures usually dry up from one to two months before new corn is ready to feed, and the cattle will need old corn. For those who do not have corn to spare for such cattle, it is doubtful if winter hay and summer pasture alone, without corn, would be profitable. There is too big an investment in the steer alone, and too much risk, unless good gains in weight can be made during the year that the steer is held.

SHEEP

Sheep numbers on January 1, 1948, are expected to be slightly smaller than a year earlier. The decline in sheep numbers since early in the war seems nearly at an end.

The 1947 lamb crop is smaller than 1946 and more ewe lambs are being held for replacement. Good pastures this year mean that a higher than usual proportion of lambs will come to market ready for slaughter. On that account, together with the small crop, fewer feeder lambs will be available this year than last.

Large war-end wool stocks have been reduced materially. With the wool situation being corrected and with sheep numbers the lowest in over 20 years, the time should be about ripe for farmers with sheep equipment but no sheep to start a flock again.

Check Supplies Against Needs

One of the first things to do this year is to check feed supplies against livestock needs. Table 2 gives average grain feed requirements. If a person is a good

Table 2. Average Farm Grain-Feeding Requirements*

	Corn	Oats	Wheat
	Bushels		
Cow, 200-250 lbs. b.f., year.....	15	15	.....
Cow, 300-350 lbs. b.f., year.....	25	25	.....
Yearling heifer, year.....	7½	7½	.....
Calf, year.....	6	6	.....
Bull, mature, year.....	5	15	.....
Hog, to 235 lbs.....	15	5	.....
Steer calf, 500 pounds gain.....	45	.....	.....
Yearling steer, 400 pounds gain.....	45	.....	.....
100 hens, one year.....	55	48	13
100 chicks to 12 weeks.....	6	5	1½
100 pullets, 12 weeks to laying.....	10	10	3

* In addition each steer calf will need 150 lbs. protein; each yearling steer, 115 lbs. protein; each hog 30 lbs. middlings and 60 gals. skim milk (or 60 lbs. tankage); 100 hens will also need 2,350 lbs. of other feeds; 100 chicks, 325 additional lbs.; and 100 pullets, 420 lbs. of other feeds.

livestock man, he may use less, but many farmers use a great deal more feed. Measure the corn and grain, allow for seed grain needed, and find out how the feed will hold out.

If a shortage is indicated, it is well to know it early. Then the decision can be made whether to sell stock, reduce rations, buy feed, or cut down the amount to carry into the summer. There may be enough to carry the stock through the winter but very little for summer use. This may mean a reduction in pigs and chicks for next summer. Whatever the program, decide early.

Use Plenty of Protein

Usually if a pound of high-protein feed does not cost more than three times as much as a pound of corn, it pays to feed a well-balanced ration. This year, a pound of high protein costs considerably less than that. Corn or small grain fed without adequate protein is partly wasted.

PRICE TRENDS AFFECTING LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION

The present high prices of farm products are due partly to the strong consumer demand, partly to the needs for foreign relief. Watch the developments in both these fields as a guide to probable future prices.

Employment is at an all-time high in the United States. Practically everyone who wants work can work at good wages. Moreover, other consumer money, such as war-year savings and terminal-leave bonds, is available. These funds are being spent for all types of goods, and every phase of American life is busy supplying the goods. As more nonfood consumer goods become available, there will be more competition for the dollars the consumers have to spend. If consumer demands should drop, or if inventories should accumulate so that large numbers of workers would be laid off, demand for food products would drop sharply. This is not likely to happen soon, but employment figures and other business trends should be watched.

What Congress does this winter in connection with foreign relief will need to be watched closely in planning future farm operations. If large appropriations are made, prices will go up. Purchases of grains and other food products would be only part of the program; purchase of industrial machinery, raw materials, and other things needed for industrial assistance would also tend to raise prices generally.

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