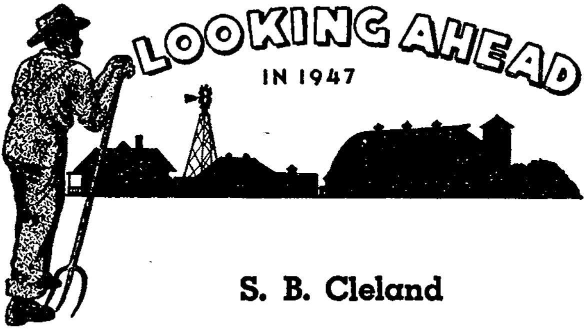
Extension Pamphlet 148 **December 1946**

FEED and LIVESTOCK *Situation*



S. B. Cleland

- **Will heavy feeding of livestock be profitable this year?**
- **How liberally should I feed high-protein supplements?**
- **How much competition will my 1947 spring pigs face when they reach the market?**
- **How will the 1947 beef supply compare to past years?**
- **What is happening to the sheep business?**

Agricultural Outlook Series No. 2

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Agricultural Extension Service
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Outlook for Feed and Livestock in 1947

FEED

WITH A RECORD corn crop and a near record oat crop, farmers have a feed supply they can turn to good advantage by heavy feeding of all classes of livestock. Prospects for prices of livestock and livestock products support this use. Some of the surplus corn will be sealed under the government loan program, but not all corn will qualify for loans. Much corn will be sold, especially in the areas of larger surplus. Liberal quantities will be held for general farm use in the summer and next year.

The fact is, the crop is so large this year that it is hard to grasp just how big it is. Minnesota's corn crop is approximately 250 million bushels against a 10-year average (1935-44) of 180 million. The total U. S. crop is 3.4 billion bushels against a 10-year average of 2.6 billion. The oat crop is not quite so extreme, but still is large—Minnesota 200 million against a 10-year average of 149; U. S. 1.5 billion and an average of 1.1 billion.

Another way to look at the feed situation is to compare the feed raised with the feed needed for livestock. Taking Minnesota as an example, and comparing the total of corn, oats, and barley raised with the total required for feed during the following feeding year, we find these situations: For the five-year prewar average (1935-39), livestock used 74 per cent of the previous season's crop, or in other words 26 per cent was left over for commercial uses, for sale outside of the state, or for carry-over for future use. In 1944-45, which saw the largest amount left over of any of the war years, the remainder was 28 per cent. But this year, even with liberal feeding, it is estimated that almost 40 per cent of the 1946 corn, oats, and barley will not be used for Minnesota feeding during the present feeding year. This is fine, to have plenty of feed, but opportunities for using the crop need to be studied, if best use is to be made of it.

Some of this year's corn went into the cribs carrying a high percentage of moisture. If drying conditions are favorable this winter, a good share will be dry enough to keep through the summer. But if toward spring it looks as though the corn is too wet to keep, some program of protection should be arranged in advance. Handling corn over from one crib to another is helpful, especially if ventilators are installed. Crib dryers are being used by some growers with good success. Or the corn may be kept as ear corn silage. Run through a silage cutter, with water added, the corn keeps well in the silo and feeds satisfactorily to hogs as well as to cattle.

HIGH-PROTEIN FEEDS

All of the high-protein feeds are scarce compared to the amount of livestock that needs to be fed. Taking the United States as a whole there are 5.4 million tons of oilseed cake and meal, compared with 5.7 tons a year earlier and 6.2 tons for each of 1943 and 1944. Similarly the animal proteins are down and cannot be expected to increase until more livestock reach the killing floors.

With a natural desire to get the meat animals on the market as efficiently and as promptly as possible, farmers would like to feed liberally of high-protein supplements, but this is a year when such feeds will need to be used very carefully and all available suggestions for sound economy should be considered.

Good-quality pasture is rich in protein, and where pasture can be used in the ration either for hogs or for cattle, some advantage can be found. Legume hay is likewise rich in protein and many cattle feeders, especially, are trying to work in larger quantities of good clover or alfalfa hay rather than depending on silage or on low-quality hay for the main roughage.

Where cattle are fed on farms on which erosion control is a factor, the long-time objective of using more hay and more pasture in connection with cattle feeding, and less silage, may be worth considering.

HOGS

The hog situation divides itself into two important problems. One is what to do with the hogs now on hand; the other is what is the best management program for 1947.

First, the present hog situation. There was a fairly good-sized spring pig crop (52 million in 1946, compared to 51 million in 1945, 41 million average 1935-39), and a fairly small fall pig crop (29 million in 1946, compared to 35 million in 1945, 26 million average 1935-39). The farmer selling either spring or fall pigs has the competition of the other fellow to think about when it comes to getting a fair price.

For the man who has surplus corn to feed, it would seem that these hogs should be an excellent place to put it. The hogs are protected by a support price, in case there should be temporary gluts at marketing time. The support prices vary, the lowest being the price of $12.75 at Chicago during most of December, 1946. By March a support price of $14.50 at Chicago is available. However, it is not expected that prices will drop to support levels during the 1946-47 season.

Fall pigs start reaching the market about April and continue during the summer. Since the fall pig crop was smaller than usual, fewer hogs will reach the market during the summer of 1947 than during the past few years. But with large cattle numbers aimed at the market during that same period, the smaller hog supplies may be offset to some extent by larger beef offerings.

In estimating the size of the spring pig crop of 1947, we find a sharp change in prospects as we get into the winter and learn what farmers intend to do. Early in the fall it was expected, because of the favorable corn-hog ratio at breeding time, that there would be a big increase in numbers this spring. But when the December report of farmers' intentions came in, it was learned that farmers do not plan to make much increase. For the United States as a whole, the intentions indicate that *farmers will increase the number of litters in the spring of 1947 only about 6 per cent over 1946.* Moreover, since the number of pigs saved per litter was above average in 1946, the estimate is that if the number saved per litter is only average in 1947, *the total number of pigs saved will be only 1 per cent over 1946.*

Those farmers who are prepared to raise early pigs in the spring of 1947, and who are ready to give the care and attention necessary to getting these hogs finished and on the market early in the fall of 1947, should be well paid for their efforts. September is a low period in hog supplies and the farmer who sells his hogs at that time should find a favorable market.

Getting hogs ready for the September market is not only a matter of having them farrowed early enough, it is a matter of having them raised in clean quarters, carried through the summer on good pasture, fed according to the best recommended methods, and managed so they will grow out rapidly and reach marketable weights early.

BEEF

Cattle numbers are still at a very high level throughout the United States. This applies not only to beef cattle but also to dairy cattle, and it applies to all the different sections of the country. The biggest increase in beef cattle numbers has taken place in the west North Central states. Cattle numbers have been increasing in this area during the war and they are still high. This is also the area where the largest increase occurred in dairy cattle. Beef cattle numbers, of course, are still large in the West and Southwest, and feed and pasture conditions are good in those areas. Sooner or later these cattle will find their way to market and as long as the buying power of the American public remains high, this beef should find a satisfactory outlet. However, it should be remembered that the quantity of beef that will be available in 1947 is a great deal more than the American public has been accustomed to in past years.

With ample corn supplies the feed lots are filling up fast with beef cattle. Record numbers are on feed in the corn belt, smaller numbers elsewhere, the total being very large. Cattle that went into the feed lots with ample flesh will be coming out in January and February; those that take a longer feed will be starting back in the spring. The expectation is that during the summer rather large numbers of well-fed cattle will come in. As a consequence a leveling off of prices may be anticipated, but where prices will settle is anybody's guess. *Experienced feeders will watch the situation carefully in order to avoid getting caught with too narrow a margin over the purchase price.*

SHEEP

Sheep numbers have been declining in the United States since early in the war. The western states now have only three-quarters as many sheep as they had at the beginning of the war, and a good many of the other sections of the United States have shown declines also. Apparently it has been more profitable to handle cattle with limited labor supplies, but whatever the reason the numbers have gone down.

One obvious result is the scarcity and high price of good feeder lambs. The normal numbers of feeder lambs, however, have been supplemented by a still further reduction in the breeding flocks since ewe lambs and ewes have been accompanying the regular feeder lamb crop to market. The demand for well-finished lambs should continue to be strong as these limited supplies reach the market.

PRICE-SUPPORTED FARM PRODUCTS

Laws were passed during the war which promised price supports for certain products. These supports were to extend for two years following the close of the year during which the war is officially declared to be ended. One phase of this legislation designates certain crops as basic commodities, and on these crops loans are to be offered at 90 per cent of parity. These basic commodities are corn, wheat, cotton, tobacco, rice, and peanuts (for nuts). Another phase of the legislation, known as the Steagall Amendment, designates certain commodities for which price floors are to be set at not less than 90 per cent of parity. These commodities are hogs, eggs, chickens (with certain exceptions) and turkeys, milk and butterfat, dry peas of certain varieties, dry edible beans of certain varieties, soybeans for oil, peanuts for oil, flaxseed for oil, American-Egyptian cotton, potatoes, and cured sweet potatoes.

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