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The Livestock System in Iowa County

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Summary

The livestock and livestock products accounted for about 80 percent of the total farm income on 28 Iowa county farms for which records are available during 1925 to 1927. The importance of efficient feeding is emphasized by the fact that the value of feeds consumed comprised about three-fourths of the livestock expenses.

Each of the livestock enterprises tended to fill definite functions in the farm business. The nature of the cattle and hog enterprises tended to vary from farm to farm depending on the type of land, acreages in feed crops and the labor supply.

The size of the hog enterprise varied widely but tended to be adjusted to the number of acres in corn and the amount of labor available. On the smaller farms more fall pigs were raised than on those large farms where the crops needed all available labor in the late summer and fall. Spring pigs were produced with an average of about 50 pounds less of concentrates but with a month more pasturage than fall pigs.

The cattle enterprise was generally organized to make use of the available acreage of pasture. On those farms producing large corn crops, cattle tended to assume the form of a feeding enterprise to consume the surplus of corn above the needs of the hogs.

There was a tendency to feed the cattle only on feed that had been raised on the farm. This was particularly true of the milk cows, which received too little protein supplements. If some good protein supplement such as cottonseed meal or linseed oilmeal or a home grown supplement such as soybeans, had been added to the rations, which consisted mainly of corn and mixed hay with a high percentage of timothy, the butterfat yield per cow would have been increased materially.

In both the hog and cattle enterprises the expense per head for labor and shelter decreased appreciably as the size of the herds increased.

Commercial feeding was practiced on about one-fifth of the farms. On farms with a large percentage of tillable land and a heavy production of corn, cattle were usually fed in winter in order to consume the surplus of corn above the needs of the hogs and to provide occupation for labor. Summer feeding was generally practiced only where there was a large acreage of rough pasture land, or where there was a supply of labor in excess of the crop requirements.