

War-time meat shortage adds spur to island beef production program

Prince Edward Island's cattlemen are rapidly improving and expanding their beef production, spurred on by the challenge of matching quality elsewhere, and the knowledge of a huge shortage in the Atlantic area.

The slightly less than five per cent of Red and Blue brand carcasses compares with almost 50 per cent across the country—52.5 per cent Red and 14.9 Blue.

Though Island producers are showing improvement and are getting slightly less than 25 per cent in the Brown or Standard brand, it represents an improvement that is encouraging. Livestock Director L.W. Roper notes with appreciation.

The challenge to produce a top quality product hits the Island beefmen hard as they strive to come close to their product where quality has trailed other provinces, to the "best in Canada" rating held by hogmen here who last year achieved an unprecedented 52.2 per cent of grade A carcasses. No other province matches it and Canadian average is 34.



L. W. ROPER

100,000 GOAL

The drive for more and better beef started several years ago, and Mr. Roper seems optimistic perhaps when he estimates the goal of 100,000 more cattle will be reached in five years.

There have always been some good beef cattle in the province, but there had never been enough good animals before to make much of an impression on the over all picture. Now that is being changed as Shorthorn, Hereford and Angus breeders step up their activity, with importations of foundation stock from Ontario distributed among

many Island cattlemen in the past two years.

Angus men have been the most active as they have increased their membership by almost 10 times since the beef drive started. But the Hereford men are almost equally active, although the traditionally strong Shorthorn association may not be making such an obvious effort to expand at the present.

Seeking a further incentive to increased production, cattlemen organized late last year a P.E.I. Beef Producers Association with the idea of getting better prices. Several ideas were studied to improve the price structure before a decision was made to try a price formula, offered by Canada Packers, for up to one year. It's based on the Winnipeg price—western meat is brought in to fill the Maritime

deficiency—plus transportation costs to Halifax, less the cost of transporting meat from Charlottetown to the Halifax market.

MARKETING YARD

A competitive basis at regular intervals, the association directors agreed recently to work toward a Livestock Marketing Yard program that would offer cattle on auctions and, these people feel, would be more likely to bring the best possible price for their beef animals.

"It doesn't mean," president Daniel Gass explains, "that we shall have the yards right away, but it does mean that we are firmly resolved now to work towards that objective."

Expectations are that this program will come under the provisions of the Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Act so that substantial federal and provincial financial aid will be available.

The beef people point with envy to the Island hogs that have commanded market prices equal to Montreal for many years, but the cattle prices do not compare. There is plenty of incentive for increased production for an agricultural spokesman suggests there is room for a \$10 million boost in livestock revenue if the full potential is reached, and this would mean almost \$500 for the average family of five people, an impressive figure that stirred sharp thinking.

S.C. Wright, deputy agricultural minister, says the Atlantic Province people eat 69.2 million pounds more beef annually than they produce. Their meat shortage is the Atlantic area include one and one-half million

million pork, 16.8 million chickens and fowl and 5.2 million turkey. The Island, itself, is deficient in chickens and fowl and in turkey, he said recently.

CUT PRODUCTION

The emphasis on beef is also aimed at replacing inefficient dairy production, agriculture minister Andrew MacRae has stated. This is in keeping with an urge to cut production across the country rather than face an ever increasing butter surplus.

Reducing the dairy influence in this traditionally dairy province would also, it was felt, increase the quality of the average beef carcass. Many beefmen, like Shorthorn breeder Ralph Adams, O'Leary, maintain that it takes at least two crosses of beef to produce a carcass that will brand. Livestock graders explain that a red or blue carcass is 50 per cent conformation and 50 per cent finish.

But there's still a strong core of dairy cattlemen whose idea of a beef steer is a beef-dairy

cross with many liking the big fast-growing carcass from a beef-Holstein mating. And such veteran beef producers as the Sanderses, long among the best in the Island and Maritimes with their registered Herefords, like the Hereford-Holstein cross as the best paying beef carcass.

Tom Sanderson, North River, has a stable full of the Hereford-Holstein cross steers in his barn at present, insists they are the best paying beef steer.



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The acreage last year was composed of some 1,700 acres of peas, 700 acres of potatoes, 500 acres of "cote crops" (broccoli, brussels sprouts, and cauliflower), and 100 acres of spinach.

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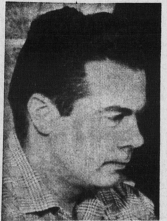
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