The Western Australian pig industry

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THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
PIG INDUSTRY

In terms of gross production the Western Australian pig industry is not large.

Pig raising has featured as a sideline to dairying and wheat farming, and only recently have pigs become a specialised enterprise. Today most of our pigs come from the wheatbelt, and although much more attention is now paid to their feeding, management and housing, they are still only a sideline on the wheat farm. Here its importance rests in its value to those who have been carried over difficult periods by the returns from the piggery.

In the South-West the collection of milk by tanker from the farm extends each year, and it must be only a matter of time before most farm separation of milk ceases. When this happens the main reason for keeping pigs on a dairy farm will disappear, leaving only the pig enthusiasts.

Around the Perth Metropolitan Area the number of specialist pig-raisers has increased, and although their production still accounts for only a small portion of the total, it is certain to increase over the next few years.

In the past, pig prices have been subject to violent fluctuations caused by oversupply followed by shortage, and it is only over the past four or five years that any long period of stability has been maintained.

Today the situation is once again very uncertain, and although returns are still reasonable, sow numbers are high and still rising. It would appear that further increases would bring about a fall in price.

The forecast wheat surplus does not help the situation, and unless outlets for pigmeats outside Australia can be found (and at present this appears doubtful), pig-raisers may be forced to take less for their product. On the bright side, they may also be able to obtain their feed cheaper.

The pig industry is changing rapidly both for the producer and the processor, and if markets are to be developed, pig-raisers will have to devote more attention to producing the right type of animal for the market, and processors will have to be more exacting in their requirements, paying premiums for the grade of pigs they want.

Publicity has been given to large pig enterprises which, if a number were established, could supply the total needs of the market. There is no doubt that these large enterprises have pointed the way the industry should be going, emphasising the importance of selection for economic factors, correct usage of feed, and erection of good pig housing. Such enterprises require a high degree of management and a great deal of capital, and although there is a place for them, most pigs will continue to be produced on the general farm.

—P. McNAMARA.