It pays to breed your own pigs

Department of Agriculture, Western Australia

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It pays to breed your own pigs

Erratum
Attached to Identical twins Department of Agriculture, Western Australia Vol 2 No 8 p 650

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IDENTICAL TWINS

The response to the Department's appeal for identical twin calves has been gratifying, and so far this year five sets have been located and collected. In view of the rare occurrence of identical twinning, this indicates excellent co-operation from dairy farmers.

The twins collected this year have been placed on the Bundibup Research Station, Wokalup, and are already being used in a relatively simple calf feeding trial. As the calves mature they will be used in further highly important studies, particularly feeding, breeding, and management investigations.

Farmers are reminded that identical twins are still needed, and will be needed each year from now on. They are wanted as soon as possible after birth, preferably before they are more than a week old. Brief details of sire, dam, feeding and any other information which will help give some background to animals to be used for future research should also be given, if possible, at the time of collection.

Pictured is an attractive set of identical twins collected from Mr. H. D. Styles, of Manjimup.

GET READY FOR SILAGE MAKING

Paddocks for silage cutting should have been closed up by now in all dairying districts, except, perhaps, the lower south coast.

Early cutting of silage is recommended, for a variety of reasons. These include:
- It gives an aftermath of high quality regrowth, which is valuable for either green or dry grazing.
- Early cut material makes higher quality silage.
- Better pastures, with a higher clover content, will be obtained next season.

Whatever paddocks are closed up—and good pasture paddocks make the best silage—it is important that they should be clear of sticks, large stones, wire and so on, and any stumps should be clearly pegged or marked so that valuable machinery will not be damaged during the harvesting operations.

The silage making machines should be checked over before it is time to start cutting, to avoid costly breakdowns, and suitable sites for stacking, clamping or pitting the cut material should be selected. These should be well drained and easily accessible to machines or stock.
EAR TAGS TO IDENTIFY CALVES

POSITIVE identification of young calves is often a problem for the dairy farmer, especially where the calves are similar in colour and markings, or where young calves are brought in from outside the farm. It is dangerous to attempt to rely on memory for later identification.

Under the rules of artificial breeding all dairy calves got by insemination must be marked by field operators or herd recorders. The inseminator or recorder makes fairly frequent visits, but it is essential that the young calves should be accurately identified in a temporary way until he can make permanent tattoos.

A simple method of ensuring positive identification is to use coloured plastic ear tags, which are readily available in a big variety of colours. It is easy to attach an ear tag shortly after the birth of each calf so that there will be no chance of error when the tattoo is done.

As well as being important to the farmer himself, correct identification is important to the success of sire surveys. A haphazard approach to calf identification introduces a risk of wrong information being used in the surveys.

IT PAYS TO BREED YOUR OWN PIGS

ONE of the most important decisions to be made by a pig raiser is whether to purchase store pigs which he will fatten for market, or to breed his own stock.

Some people like to buy stores because it is considered a speculative enterprise that may give a quick return, whilst others with small piggeries do not wish to carry the overhead expense of keeping a boar, with only two or three sows. These small farmers could possibly have their sows mated to neighbours' boars but there may be several reasons against this. For instance there is the chance of introducing disease and also the trouble of transporting the sows to the boar, possibly several times, all of which is unsatisfactory.

A seasonal increase in the feed supply, particularly with products such as skim-milk, usually creates a strong demand for weaners and slips, and these are usually expensive.

The final decision on whether or not to buy pigs may also be affected by the feeling of the grower that he lacks good facilities for breeding, or that his attempts have failed because of a high piglet mortality.

Buying store pigs may be considered economically sound in some cases, but this practice always carries certain risks.

Store pigs are largely of unknown quality. The buyer does not always know what standard of feeding or management they were subjected to before reaching the market. A farmer normally keeps his best weaners for fattening up to the porker or baconer stage, so that the store pig is commonly a cull which has been rejected because of poor growth, disease, or bad breeding.

Despite the apparent good health of pigs in the saleyard there is also a serious danger of introducing diseases, such as paratyphoid, leptosperosis or virus pneumonia.

A farmer may often lose money because he cannot purchase the class of pig which he requires, or he may be forced to pay high prices for weaners and slips, especially when there is a strong demand during the seasonal flush of skim milk.
For highest profits it is best to avoid buying pigs, and concentrate on efficient production of farm grown animals. Carry as many sows as you can over the year.

Overhead costs of keeping sows can be kept down by attention to these two fundamental points:

1. **Reduce Piglet Mortality.**
   
   Good sow management, use of a recommended type of farrowing pen which will protect new-born piglets, and good control of piglets diseases should keep piglet deaths to a minimum.

2. **Make the Most Efficient Possible Use of the Feed Available.**
   
   For example, to avoid wasting sows should be mated so that they farrow six weeks before 20 per cent. of the cows are due to calve. The piglets will then be ready to use the flush skim milk when it comes. If there is a surplus of skim milk, give some thought to preserving it as curd, in which form it can be stored for long periods. When little or no fresh skim milk is available in the summer, curd is useful as a feed for sows.

   Grain, which often has to be carted long distances, is an expensive pig feed for dairy farmers. Potatoes are usually readily available in dairy areas, and used as a part replacement of grain, they often prove much cheaper. They are best cooked before feeding to pigs. Four pounds of potatoes will replace one pound of grain.

   When it is possible to hammermill a high quality lucerne or clover hay this product can be a useful protein supplement for breeding sows, but it has the limitation of a high fibre content, and for growing pigs its use should therefore be restricted.

   Green grazing is a very cheap feed for pigs over the weaner stage because it is a source of minerals, Vitamin A and protein, and if plentiful it can halve the animal protein supplement (such as meatmeal) which should normally be fed.

   If at least some of these suggestions are carried out the farmer should find it more profitable to breed his own pigs.

## DON'T NEGLECT THE VACUUM REGULATOR

The relief valve or vacuum regulator is a most important component of the milking machine, as it determines the vacuum level for milking and enables full use to be made of the reserve air.

Surveys conducted by the Dairying Division have revealed that many machines are equipped with obsolete relief valves; others have been fitted with modern weighted types in accordance with departmental recommendations. The survey results have also shown that the maintenance on all types of regulators is usually very poor.

In general, the vacuum regulator appeared to be the most neglected component in the milking machines examined.

In order to obtain maximum efficiency from any type of regulator it is necessary to clean it frequently and to ensure that moving parts are free to operate. The small air admission holes should receive special attention.

In the case of spring loaded poppet types it is advisable to “grind them in” occasionally to ensure that the valve and seat faces are mated.
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