

LIVESTOCK INTERESTS OF THE CENTRAL NORTHWEST

Views of an Expert on the Natural Advantages of This Region for Stock Growing

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In years past the upper Mississippi valley has been known as a great grain-raising section. The people of Europe, Great Britain and many other foreign countries are familiar with this territory as the home of the spring bread wheats. So famous have Minnesota and the Dakotas become for this important product that many other resources have been lost sight of. It is true that thirty or forty years ago wheat raising was the chief occupation of the inhabitants of this region. The country was new and many of the industries that today are important ones were entirely undeveloped. The buffalo and the reindeer were often seen, but scarcely a footprint of the domesticated animals could be found, except the patient horse or the plodding ox, used by the settler for breaking the prairie sod. Grain raising offered quick returns and with the pioneers money was a constant necessity. Is it any wonder that they followed the vocation of grain raising when the fertility of the broad prairies could be so quickly and easily turned into cash?

In a land naturally so well adapted to other lines of production, however, grain raising could not long stand out as the only industry offering sure remuneration to the land owner. Gradually the milk cow followed the ox that broke the furrows on the rolling prairie farms. The western ranges filled with cattle to fatten on the native grasses. The pig and the sheep supplemented the income of the small land holder until they also became an important factor in the aggregate wealth of the country. When once fitted into the farm operations of the northwest the value of live stock in the economic production of the grain crops soon became apparent. A few years of grass and pasture brought largely increased yields when the land was again returned to grain raising. And the live stock was in turn useful in converting the waste and surplus of the grain fields into useful marketable commodities. So apparent are the mutual ben-

efits of mixed stock and grain raising, that scarcely a single well-regulated farm can now be found without a fair proportion of live stock.

Natural Advantages.

A significant fact in this connection is the great natural advantages for stock raising. Taking into consideration all of the requirements for successful stock-raising, it is doubtful if there is another like area in the states that can afford as good conditions for growing and fattening domestic animals economically. The great plains of the Dakotas, covered with native prairie grasses and the nutritious buffalo grass, furnishes an ideal range for growing young stock. Large numbers of calves and yearlings are annually purchased thru the southern and eastern states and pastured thru the summer, making quick and substantial gains. Two and three year old cattle are often sold to the butcher direct from the range, the nature of the grass being such in the fall of the year as to produce an exceptionally firm and palatable meat. Sheep also are extensively raised on the Dakota ranges, often going direct to the stockyards in the fall, where they are finished on screenings from the grain elevators and flour mills. The practice of home feeding is on the increase, however, and it will be but a short time before every rancher of any considerable means will feed out his own sheep. It is on the diversified farms, however, that the natural advantages of the country can best be used.

Native Grasses.

Scarcely a variety of grass of any value can be named that does not grow prolifically somewhere in this region. Forty or fifty species of native grasses form a sure foundation for abundant pasture and hay. Highland and lowland, swamp and hillside, each have some species of grass especially adapted to the location and of value as food for livestock. The northern woods are carpeted with clover and wild vetches, which are as nutritious as alfalfa. The outcrop land of northeastern Minnesota and the western prairie have the Austrian Brome grass in the greatest profusion, and the clovers are per-

fectly at home in such soil. Great natural meadows of blue joint and red top are found frequently where it is necessary only to go in with mower and rake or haysweep to secure the winter's roughage for a large herd or flock. Singular as it may seem, these native grasses, even when ripened on the ground, are peculiarly adapted to fattening stock. Stock buyers recognize the merit of these grasses in heavier carcasses from animals fattened on them and will pay more for cattle from the northern ranges than from the soft southern pastures.

Pure Water.

Pure water and plenty of it should be the motto of every stockraiser. Only the southern stockman who has watered stock from "dead ponds" and muddy streams and muddy water can appreciate the value of pure water. In dairying especially does this factor become important. The natural resources of Minnesota and portions of Dakota are great. Fresh streams of spring water, large and small lakes, flowing wells of pure water and drilled and dug wells with windmill pumps furnish an unlimited supply of this necessary article. No land can be better supplied at like cost.

Among the other natural advantages of which the stockman may avail himself may be mentioned the cool summer nights, the freedom from flies except during a short period in midsummer and the absence of fever, ticks, blackleg and other diseases that cause such serious loss to the southern stockraiser. The cold winters of the north are often argued as a serious drawback to stock raising. Carefully-made observations, however, lead to the belief that the dry winter climate, clean feed yards and dry bedding offer decided advantages for feeding over the muddy yards and humid, the warmer climate of the south. Less discomfort is encountered in a northern feed lot than in the feed lots supposedly in more favorable climates.

Classes of Stock Grown.

All classes of livestock that deserve a place in the farm economy are grown in this region. The diversified nature noted for years for her dairy products. Nearly seventeen million dollars' worth of dairy products in 1899 shows the extent of this branch of the state's industry. Scarcely an industrial exhibition can be mentioned where Minnesota butter has not led the exhibits of dairy products. No class of butter sells higher on the eastern market than the Minnesota creamery product. And to no article of farm produce is more scientific attention being given than to the production and manufacture of this same product. The farm-grown foods, hay, grain, corn and roots are all comparatively high in protein content, and well calculated for a high-class dairy product. Climate and water are other factors admittedly superior to those possessed by other states. South Dakota is nearly as well adapted to dairying and North Dakota is rapidly taking up the industry. As a profitable adjunct to the dairy and creamery the swine-raising industry stands unexcelled—skim milk and buttermilk from the creamery, whey from the factory and shorts and wheat middlings from the flour mills afford food for growing pigs that is unexcelled. These foods supplemented by clover pastures, rape fields and corn produce well produced the 150-pound shot for fattening in a short time and at the minimum cost. Corn and barley in combination with the cheap mill feeds furnish excellent finishing foods and the quality of the farm-grown swine for strictly first-class bacon is seldom surpassed. So evident is its superiority that the Union Stock Yards at South St. Paul is putting a premium on hogs produced in this region, the product in strong demand for export bacon and hams.

Sheep are not far in the rear so far as profitable production is concerned. The number of range sheep is large and the number on the diversified farm is constantly increasing. The great diversity of grasses and grains indigenous to the northwest, the abundance of root crops and the dry climate and well-trained land combine to make this region unsurpassable for the growth of sheep. For several years the Minnesota product has led the continent in quality of finished mutton. In 1901, 1902 and 1903 carcasses of pure-bred and fed in Minnesota won the championship prizes at the International livestock exposition at Chicago.

The product of our northern feed lots is eagerly sought the world over. Much of the range stock finished on grain byproducts at the feed lots or on small farms finds its way across the water to the English butchers and is held in high favor. Sheep raising in this territory is only in its infancy and is due to increase rapidly in the next few years.

Food Crops for Animals.

Cheap grazing lands and abundant grain are conducive to profitable beef raising. No one will dispute the cheapness of the land in the locality under discussion. The small grains have made the region famous. The time-tested many grasses are native to the land. The only element lacking necessary to beef production is corn. So say the southern stockmen, and yet the average yield of corn in Minnesota is only 6.2 bushels per acre less than in Illinois and 5.2 bushels less than in Iowa. South Dakota is one of our best corn-producing states and some sections of North Dakota produce good yields of corn.

Many thousand sheep were fattened in the northwest last year on the screenings cleaned from the grain fields. The custom of sowing rape seed in the western grain fields is increasing. The rape comes on after the grain crop is harvested and by the time the grass ranges are well eaten down the rape furnishes excellent feed. Large numbers of range sheep are brought into these fields in October and November of each year, making rapid gains. Two or four weeks on screenings after the run on rape fields puts them in finished shape for the market. Aftermath of other crops and gleanings from the corn and grain fields afford a large source of revenue to feeders.

Even without the corn crops in the northern sections, the bran, shorts, oil-meal and other mill products more than counterbalance the shortage. As is the case with mutton, the northern grown beef from cattle of good quality stands in high favor. That the climate and foods are favorable to the production of high-grade meat is evidenced by the fact that a Minnesota-bred steer last December was pronounced the champion fat steer of the country. It sold on foot for 36 cents a pound. His carcass sold in New York city for 50 cents a pound and was said to be one of the finest carcasses of beef ever cut up in that city. This steer was raised from calfhood on home-grown foods.

Improved Livestock.

In early days much of the stock of the northwest was of inferior quality. There is yet much room for improvement in the quality of stock raised on the range and on the diversified farm. Much as the value of livestock has been increased, however, by the greater number of animals kept, it is safe to say that the improvement in quality of stock has added even more to the total value of livestock products. It is a rare instance when a prospective purchaser needs go out of his own

county to secure a pure-bred sire. In many localities large herds of pure-bred breeding stock are kept that have a national reputation for quality and breeding. Our state agricultural society is conceded to have the honor of holding the best livestock show of any agricultural society in the union. The sales of stock held annually are of national importance. Horses, cattle, sheep and swine of pure blood are all strongly represented in this region, the range stock receiving even more attention than the stock of the small farmer. It is no uncommon thing for carloads of pure-bred sires to be sent to the ranges and the effect of such blood is rapidly showing up in the quality of the stock returned to the market.

Live-Stock Interests Increase Rapidly.

That the people of the northwest realize the importance of the livestock industry is shown by the rapid increase in the amount of stock grown. A careful examination of the last census shows an increase of 100.8 per cent in the cattle raised in 1900 over those raised in 1890. The increase in horses for the same period is 67 per cent; for sheep, 164 per cent, and for swine, 134 per cent. A total of 10,533,846 animals of all classes in 1900 as against 4,997,241 in 1890 perhaps shows most strikingly the rapidity of the increase in stock raising. The records of shipments to stockyards confirm these figures and all indications point to a still more rapid increase in the future.

A fact often overlooked by students of farm matters is the increased production per acre of the live-stock farm. As given by Latzke in his studies of the last census report, the average value of production per acre on hay and grain farms in this state is \$4.78. The average value of production per acre on the stock farms is \$5.56, or an increase in productive value thru the addition of live stock of 78 cents an acre. Instances can be found without number where "run out" grain farms have been renewed and again made productive by a few years in grass and cultivated crops. The humus added to the soil by the grass roots, the grazing of the cattle and sheep and the application of the barnyard manure, rich from the droppings of grain-fed stock, quickly raise the producing power of

the land and make profitable farming possible. The acreage of grain could be cut down one-half and still produce as many bushels of grain as at present, by better methods of farming. More

live stock means not less grain, but more bushels per acre of grain on less acres. It also means the employment of labor and capital thruout the year and surer returns on the investment. Where conditions so favorable to the

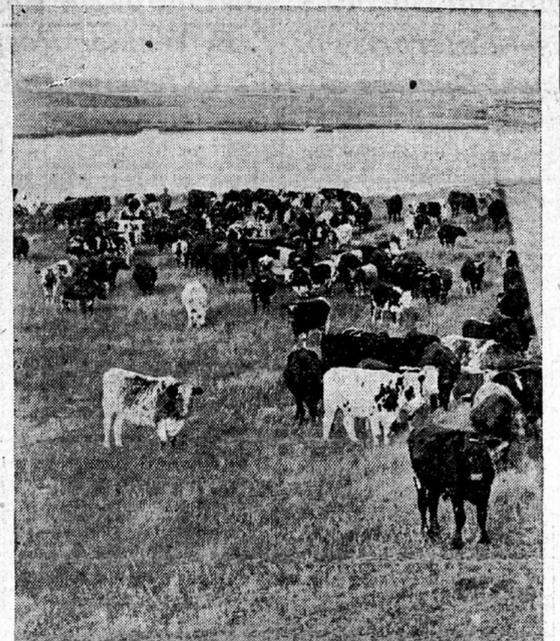
growth of all classes of stock are conceded to prevail and where such evident financial gains follow stock farming, is it too much to predict that our live-stock interests will soon lead all of our industries for profitable employment of capital and labor?

MINNESOTA SOILS

There is a great diversity of soils within the state. Over a large area, rich black loam resting upon a still subsoil and containing an abundance of lime and plant food predominates. In other parts of the state sandy loams and clay loams are found. There are also some poor sandy lands within the state, but on the whole the rich, fertile soils predominate, soils which are among the most productive of the country. In soil wealth alone Minnesota is unexcelled. Minnesota is not in the dry belt; the average rainfall at Worthington, in the southwestern part of the state, for six years is reported as 27.64 inches; in the northwestern part of the state is 25.6 inches; of the southern central as 29, and of the northern central as 31.—W. M. Liggett, dean agricultural college.

CHARACTER OF THE POPULATION

Minnesota offers other advantages to the prospective homeseeker besides fertile soils capable of producing a great diversity of crops. The early pioneers came from the best farming communities of northern Europe and the eastern states. It is the early settlers who have developed the soil resources and made Minnesota a great agricultural state, and the homemaker now has all of the advantages of good neighbors, excellent schools, the best transportation facilities, good markets and established churches. Lawlessness has never been rampant in the state, the taxes are low, there is no large state debt for posterity to pay, nor repudiated bonds to mar the credit of the state. The opportunities for the small farmer to make a comfortable home in Minnesota, engage in diversified farming and receive a fair recompense for his labors are unsurpassed.



A CLEAN LOOKING BUNCH.

—Photo by A. S. Williams.



THERE ARE LOTS OF THESE IN THE NORTHWEST.

—Photo by A. S. Williams.

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