

WHAT SIZE SHOULD FARMS BE?

Address by Hugh J. Hughes, Editor Farm, Stock & Home, Before the West Central Minnesota Development Association Meeting, Willmar, Dec. 13, 1912.

Several ways of approach at this question occur to any one who makes a business of farming. I am speaking of it in the sense of what a man may reasonably expect to handle alone and with the best results as to profit.

It follows that from this standpoint you have a one, two, three or many unit farm, just in proportion to the ability of the owner or directing head to manage men and to make their work profitable. And there can be little question but that the tendency today is in the direction of larger farms made up of single units. For example, if a tractor can be so used as to do the work of three four-horse teams, it establishes a new unit of side and a new standard of efficiency. But traction farming is today a matter of the future with us, rather than of the present. Our unit of size is fixed by the day. Whether conditions

the standard of the seeding and harvest efficiency of one four-horse team working as steadily as ordinary field conditions warrant.

When an all-grain farmer uses much less than this amount of land he has idle time and teams and machinery to account for. When he owns more he usually skins the land or has an idle acreage that stands as a liability against his business—a long time investment which in the majority of cases, he cannot afford to carry. In either case he faces an increased cost per acre of production which he cannot afford, and which will in the end send him along with his machinery to the scrap heap.

NO IDLE LAND NOR EQUIPMENT.

This is saying in other words, that a great many of our farms need cutting down in size if the profits are to be increased. Sometimes the rule will work the other way. But in either case the man who gives his attention to the business side of the problem will see that there must be a balance between acres and teams and machinery such that each shall do their largest practical amount of work. Then, and not until then, can steady profits be made by grain farming.

WHY FARM HOURS ARE LONG.

At this time we are in the position of the small boy with the cake and the apples. We have resolved to eat them both. We are trying to put stock or dairy farms on top of our grain acreage. We forget that we must carry a double burden of labor. We have kicked the prairie-schooner cow on the shin and made her "hist over" after the rest of the chores were done, and still imagine we can do the same with the twenty cows we are now milking. As a result we are accused by the city chaps an eighteen-hour day; our boys and girls get tired of the everlasting labor or grind and go down town to clerk at \$30 a month and board taken out; and the hired man is as scarce and labor shy as the grouse are scarce and the gun shy after the opening of the season.

What is the matter? Simply that we have not taken into account a new unit of farm size—"cow-man efficiency" we might call it for want of a better term—the number of cows or other stock that one man can most profitably care for.

FACTORY VS. MINE.

The cow is another kind of machine than the binder, more perfect, and more delicate. In order to make her profitable, her care must be made a part of the day's work and not shifted off to the rag end of chore time. This means a reshaping of all the farm plans. The field work must be cut down. The acreage must be changed to suit the new cash-producer's appetite. The grain farmer must give up his dream of getting rich at grain farming and look for a standard of size that is not scarce, but net profits per cow. In other words he ceases to be a miner of the

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and the calls of outside business lower the maximum ability of man and team making twenty acres of plowing and one hundred acres of harvesting very good weekly work. Carrying out this line of figuring a little farther the season work of a man and four horse team on a strictly grain farm is from 200 to 250 acres taking one year with another. If this carries the ordinary line of stock—three or four cows, a half dozen head of young cattle, a few hogs, and the usual flock of chickens, cared for after the usual slip shod manner of the all-grain farmer, the hay land and pasture necessary will cover the remainder of the half section.

Then as a grain unit, 320 acres of land is about right—neither so small as to make the power and machinery acre-charge too heavy, nor so large as to lead to waste in the methods of tillage employed.

THE EXTREME LIMIT OF SIZE.

It is easy to see that if we are to expand the all-grain farm economically, we must add to it another half section, and then another, and so on up to the limit of managerial ability of the owner, measuring roughly by

soil, and becomes a manufacturer, and the real size of his plant is measured not by its extent but by its annual net revenue. While the acreage basis of size still remains, the dairy or stock farmer must give first thought to the question of net profit per animal and the number that he can properly care for. He must look at the field work as incidental to this profit, and at increased per-acre yield as lowering the cost of production of stock or dairy products as the case may be.

NEW ITEMS TO RECKON WITH.

The over head charges of farming under the new system will increase. Besides labor, teams, machinery, and acreage, there is now added buildings, fences and stock. To offset this burden of investment the increase must be constant throughout the year, and it must show a good

margin of net profit. Again we get back to the individual as the basis. Beef, steer, or hogs, or dairy cow—it is net profit from the individual animal that figures out success or failure to the farmer in the end.

DANGER FROM TOO SMALL FARM.

At the same time it should be clearly understood that the cutting down of farm acreage has a peril of its own. It takes brains to make a living on an eighty acres of land. It can be done, and a comfortable profit can be laid aside, but one must have 80-bushel oat land, 3-ton clover land, and 300 to 400 pound butter fat cows to help him or he is not going to make the living he ought to make. And these things come not ex-

actly by fasting and prayer but by patient effort, constant attention, and good business judgment. About the only thing scarcer than the cow that can produce 6,000 pounds of four per cent milk per year is the farmer who can produce the cow. And until we get more farmers who are capable of doing the trick we go slow on advising the small farm. For the average man of the present generation and its lack of training there is more money in a quarter section half developed than he could get out of 80 acres. The time has not arrived for that intensive agriculture that has made Holland and Denmark great. As a general proposition we lack the business ability to use our acres as well as they use theirs. But the time is here when we must carefully study these matters of farm size and the cost of production, with the very

possible solution that on the one hand we shall see great farms managed at a low acre cost, furnishing the bulk of the cash crop supplies of the market, and on the other greatly increased numbers of dairy and stock farms, smaller than our present average in point of acreage, much greater than our farms today in point of net profit and the home comfort that comes from business success.

Scalded Child Dies.

Little Florence Dilley, who on Wednesday evening of last week was scalded with hot dish water, died on the Friday following at 5 o'clock a. m. Her little head was the most severely scalded, in fact it was fairly cooked, and her death may be looked upon as a blessing by her parents. She was born Dec. 11, 1911, and died Dec. 6, 1912. She was a bright, sweet-faced little girl and was loved very dearly by her parents. It was their only child, and the sympathy of all is extended to them in their bereavement.

The funeral was held at the Presbyterian church on Monday afternoon and was conducted by Rev. Easley. The remains were laid away at Oak Hill cemetery.

Moving Real Estate.

William Olson and Co. were very busy last week closing up the following deals: The Great Northern Hotel at New London which has been owned and conducted by Nels Quam for many years was sold to S. Mack of Tracy, Minn. The Erick Holsten building and lot, New London, was sold to Frank Rose. The Gust Ristram property on the west shore of Green Lake to Andrew Olson; Andreas Olson's 80 acre farm in town of Green Lake to Anius Johnson. The Emily Holm 80 acre farm in town of New London to John Nilson. An 11 acre timber lot on north side of Green Lake, owned by John Okerson to Peter A. Jagerson. The latter intends to erect a building on the place in the near future.—Green Lake Breeze.

Henry Hesse, a Melville farmer was driving into Bird Island Tuesday forenoon and in crossing the railroad track a half mile east of the depot was struck by a work train. The train was backing down the track at the time to get over the east switch and it appears Mr. Hesse did not realize his danger until it was too late. Being muffled up it is thought he did not see the train back down until it was upon him. The car struck the horses, knocking them off the track and killing one instantly, and injuring the other so that he had to be killed. Mr. Hesse was thrown some distance and a part of the wagon was thrown on him. He was picked up by the train crew and taken to Bird Island and both the local doctors were summoned. He appeared to

be in a serious condition at the time although no bones were broken. Whether he received internal injuries or not could not be ascertained but it is thought he will recover. He is about 65 years of age and this makes his injury the more serious. He is being cared for at the Tom McGovern home in town where he is receiving every attention.—Olivia Times.

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