

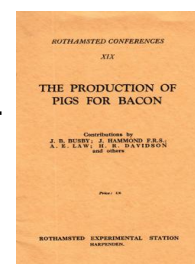
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## Rothamsted Conferences XIX

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### The Breeding and Feeding of Bacon Pigs

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A. E. Law (1936) *The Breeding and Feeding of Bacon Pigs* ; Rothamsted Conferences Xix, pp 15 - 17  
- DOI: <https://doi.org/10.23637/ERADOC-1-206>

## THE BREEDING AND FEEDING OF BACON PIGS

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It was not without hesitation I accepted the kind invitation to read a paper setting forth my opinions, and describing the methods of breeding and feeding as practised at Newborough. Many of you will perhaps know that I have attained a certain measure of success in feeding and exhibiting commercial pigs of my own breeding.

This success has not been due to the study of scientific methods, although I should be the last to deny that much practical use can, and should be made of what science can teach us in the management of our pigs.

I would advise anyone proposing to keep pigs, to secure as full a knowledge as possible of the theory, before commencing the practice, and then, if only in a small way to get the best possible equipment, foods, etc., not forgetting well-bred pigs from a reliable source.

Were I commencing now, I should endeavour to carry out the above advice, but I should not advise any of you to make a journey to Newborough to take a pattern for equipment.

My success with bacon pigs, I attribute chiefly to my market experience, endeavouring to purchase pigs for bacon factories that would as nearly as possible satisfy the requirements of curer and retailer. Knowing what is really required has made it easier for me than for many breeders producing bacon pigs.

### *Breeding for Bacon*

We must take this first, and one of the most important essentials in the production of Grade A bacon is the fact that your pigs *must be bred right*. If the pig is not bred right you cannot make a baconer however well you feed.

I have no desire to enter into any argument as to which is the best breed or cross breed for bacon. I do think it would be easier if there were not so many breeds to choose from.

Personally I still favour a *pure-bred Large White*, long in the body, short on the leg, wedge shaped, but the point at the right end, straight top and tight underline (the barrel-shaped pig is never a baconer) shoulders and fore-end fine, but not excessively so, because it often means loss of constitution and light gammons as well. The gammon should be full, especially just above the flank. If you get it there, you can be sure that your pig is lean. It is unnecessary in an assembly of practical men to emphasise *the supreme importance of the boar*.

It is not always the Show-winning boar that gets the best com-

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mercial pigs. *Be sure your boar has a masculine head.* You don't often find a bad boar with a good head.

My breeding sows run on a free range of 30 acres and are with the boar all the year round day and night. Sows come in about 10 days before farrowing to get settled down and accustomed to change of feeding. I prefer indoor treatment for the young pigs, excepting perhaps the summer months, when possibly outdoor farrowing may be preferable. When weaned I always like the young pigs indoors, and not more than 15 or so to run together. The best results are generally obtained with small units. I find it best to treat all pigs for worms at weaning time.

Pigs are weaned at eight weeks excepting in November, December and January, when we usually allow 10 weeks.

*Feeding*

I always think the feeder who has a good supply of a by-product or waste material that can be used in fairly large proportions can be certain of a profit pig feeding all the time.

Those who only have a standard meal ration will not always show a profit.

Our stand-by is potatoes, which we use practically all the year round. I can mention others quite as useful if used with discretion. Milk either whole or separated, whey from the cheese factories, flesh—one of the finest things to produce heavy weighing lean pigs.

All the above materially cheapen a ration, and are sure to show a good return if carefully used in moderate quantities.

During the war I fed a considerable number of purchased stores on steamed potatoes and fish meal only (95 per cent. potatoes and 5 per cent. fish meal) and for pigs over 16 weeks it is a very useful food if introduced gradually.

My own meal ration, which is ground and mixed at home, consists of wheat and barley 60 per cent. (at present the proportion is 35 per cent. wheat and 25 per cent. barley), maize 10 per cent. (usually in the form of maize meal), wheatings 17 per cent., soya meal 8 per cent. and fish meal 5 per cent.

For suckling sows and weaners we use two-thirds of the above plus one-third wheatings and a little fish meal to balance the extra wheatings.

The food for young pigs for the first three months of their life should be the best obtainable, and the amount should be all they can clear up in the first 10 minutes after feeding. After that age I do not advise forcing them if a Grade A baconer is required.

If fed to full capacity you may get your pigs too fat, and sacrifice length of carcase.

The pig required for Wiltshire style bacon is not a finished pig but a three-quarter one.

My general feeding practice is briefly as follows : When meal only is being fed the pigs have two feeds per day. When potatoes are available, two feeds of steamed potatoes are given without water, and

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a drink of meal and water is given about mid-day as much as is required. For green foods I use a little lucerne, clover or kale. In-pig sows at grass have raw potatoes only; it is exceptional for them to receive any meal unless they come off heavy litters in low condition, when  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lb. of meal is supplied.

I notice it is generally advised when using fish meal in a ration to discontinue it for the last month of feeding.

This I do not agree with if lean flesh is required.

I would rather increase than decrease, as it is that part of the ration which is chiefly responsible for the formation of lean or muscle.

Many substitutes for fish meal are offered and rations without it showing almost exactly the same analysis, but there must be an indefinable something which analysis does not show.

For young pigs anyway, I think *fish meal cannot be equalled* by any other food.

Soya bean meal can be replaced satisfactorily by home-grown beans, or peas, but an increased percentage is necessary and also at least 8 per cent. of fish meal.

A last word on feeding . . . but a most important one . . . Your man must be willing and take a lively interest, or results will not be satisfactory. A large proportion of my success is undoubtedly due to my man Charles Lake, who rears and feeds my show pigs, and who I honestly believe could feed winners *whatever the ration*.