

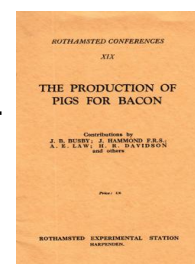
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What the Bacon Factory Wants and How the Danes Secured It

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WHAT THE FACTORY WANTS

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How many times have we heard said, "The Factories cannot be unanimous and tell the Producer what they want; if they had done so, Producers would have made provision for doing their part"? I venture to say, can you conceive to-day, any Factory taking a strong line in breeds, or anything that may tend to upset the relations with their clients?

It is purely an educational standpoint, and although good work has been achieved by many individual efforts, you cannot say that any nationally organised education, embracing all sides has been attempted.

I hope to-day's meeting may be the beginning of some such development.

True, both producer and curer have had advice from almost every angle, and from persons propounding theories, based largely on their special vested interest. I trust you will excuse me if in my paper I appear to be egotistical, but it is with a desire to help if possible.

What Does a Bacon Factory Require?

May I enumerate the points as follows:

(1) A steady supply of pigs, week in, week out, not a spasmodic and fluctuating one. A factory cannot possibly be successful unless its output is nearly 100 per cent. and steady, and it must receive:

(2) A good length pig of as early maturity as possible, taking all circumstances into account.

(3) The pig produced must have a proper and definite amount of lean meat, and in proportion the requisite amount of fat, whether it be on back or belly.

(4) The pig must kill out at a weight which is as near uniform as possible, governed by my point No. 2, and must show a far greater uniformity than at present is being produced.

(5) Pay definite attention to shoulder and depth of belly, which are points, to which quite naturally our grocer friends attach great importance.

(6) Pay strict attention to feeding, i.e., the feeding of a balanced ration and the rationing of such feeds. Especially is this necessary if you take note of point No. 3.

(7) Pay greater attention to cleanliness.

(8) Far greater attention and education on feeding and selecting of breeding stock; the only method by which results can be obtained

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is, in my opinion, recording of all breeding stock, governed by a recognised authority.

I may have got these points somewhat out of order, and for this you will perhaps excuse me. Now let me put before you my view as to how the Danes have tackled the problem, which we know they have done very successfully. I, for one, will never admit that we cannot, in this country, achieve equally good, if not better results, given the time, organisation, and to some extent a closer co-operation with those sections of agricultural control, which are allied to pig production, i.e., milk, and cereals and, last of all, fresh pork.

How the Danes Have Secured the Perfect Bacon Pig

(1) I am given to understand the Danes were, in the early stages of their organisation faced with this problem, and only overcame it by controlling every pig when it came bacon weight. We say, "But we have our large pork market to consider." This in my opinion would right itself. In the early days Copenhagen, like London to-day, would not take a singed pig for pork. To-day if an unsinged pig is sent to the Copenhagen market, it fetches less than a singed one, surely a reply to any criticism of our Smithfield experts. Control may also mean centralized pig slaughteries, surely a step in the right direction.

(2) How did the Danes secure what they term their pure bred bacon pig? First, by selecting their own cross-bred sows, called the Landrace, which I feel sure has a touch of Swedish, is a fair length with shorter legs than our Large White, more after the Wessex or Essex Saddleback in length and type. These were then crossed with selected Yorkshire Large Whites from England.

They then select the best type of bacon pig, out of this cross, for their boars, only coming back to the Yorkshire White Boar when needing fresh blood.

They seem to select for boars the longest pigs which show a little shoulder, but which, in my opinion, is counteracted by length, and getting the maturing stage for killing to five months. They are definitely slowed up at present on account of the quota, but we need to pay strict attention to maturity, which conditions here will demand at from six to six-and-a-half months.

(3) The Danes make definite educational arrangements for the correct feeding of proteins to sows, pigs when suckling, and weaners. Hence as far as practicably possible weaners never lose their baby flesh, and once they get started the proper growth of lean meat and muscle development must come. You must lay the foundation of a lean carcase; so many people come all to pieces here. I do not say there are no exceptions in Denmark. I saw some weedy, small pigs there, such as I have seen here; but having a decent percentage of good pigs to start on the Danes pay strict attention to rationing a

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known feed with the highest possible amount of proteins, such as meat with blood meal.

(4) The Danes, in my opinion, realized that the greatest uniformity can be obtained by early maturity, and tend to slaughter pigs before rather than after the normal change takes place for reproduction. Thus they make a definitely low live weight of 200 lb. starved, which would give from 7 score 10 lb. to 8 score dead weight, or 60 lb. to 64 lb. sides of bacon.

(5) This is answered in Point No. 2 as to how the Danes select their pigs by length, which governs shoulder and depth of belly.

(6) The feeding by the Danes I have dealt with in No. 3, but I must say that I saw a few pigs knocked off their feet in Denmark. I do not see how you can get a system that will do for 100 per cent. of the pigs on any producers' premises.

(7) Cleanliness. The Danes pay far greater attention to this than is generally understood here. Cleanliness of sties, greater fall in floor towards draining part of pen, and dryness of sties, eliminating as far as possible draughts; and great care in having clean feeding utensils and troughs.

Strict attention is given to construction of floors in order to avoid damp striking through, but so far as houses are concerned I believe the Danes only have heated and closed houses out of necessity, owing to their situation and windswept country.

(8) A high standard of agricultural education is provided at the Danish High Schools, and full use is made of the training there received. Boys who look for a responsible position on the land attend these schools as a matter of course, and they apply their knowledge to their farming problems, and in particular to rationing of livestock.

It is difficult to get any idea of their rations, but in my opinion they feed according to the cheapness of cereals and what is available, bearing in mind what has been officially drilled into them.

They have skimmed milk in plenty, which is an early advantage. One ration I did get was as follows:

30 per cent. wheat.

30 per cent. rye.

30 per cent. barley.

10 per cent. meat, blood, and bone meal, with separated milk as liquid.

You may say, "This would finish all my pigs off," but you must understand they have evolved a pig to stand a strong protein.

They generally feed three times per day, assuming, I suppose, a little and often, and if food is not consumed in 20 to 25 minutes, it is taken away.

What a trouble for a few pigs! But I can assure you that men sending 20 pigs to the factory in six months are as anxious as the big producer to do the job cleanly, and thoroughly to satisfy the English public, who are in their opinion the people to please. When I was over they were praying that the English producer would so far

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neglect the pig business as to defeat our Bacon and Pig Marketing Schemes, and so allow the Danes to come back to 100 per cent. production.

Are we heading for this, or are we to tighten our belts and face the job, which we can do by all pulling together? It is co-operation, not individualism, that will solve many of our difficulties.

There are one or two things, if time permits—which I would like to put to you for future consideration and discussion.

No. 1. Where do we fall short in our English pig received as against the bacon type produced by Denmark? This is a very big question and one which we all try to evade; but do not mistake me in what I may say or put forward. I have no axe to grind, just a simple mind trying to build up my case.

I tried to illustrate in point No. 2 how the Danes attained the almost perfect type of bacon pig by selection of breeding stock in the initial stages by strict recording, etc. As noted in point 8 these are purely educational matters, which we must of necessity take notice of. The Danes, in my opinion, went to an enormous amount of trouble in the selection of the Yorkshire Large White boar, and then from the litters produced, from their cross with the Landrace, picked out only those boars for breeding which gave the required length, depth of belly and good ham. Again with gilts they only picked out a type showing fineness of bone, fair hams, depth of belly commensurate with length of pig, and not too much daylight under the pig. Watching the length of leg as governed by the ham.

"Ah," you will say, "you will soon have the whole pig true to type." Exactly; and who amongst us all will come into the arena with this, the type of bacon pig required, and give a reasonably intelligent exposition of how to secure it?

Now then, where are our breed societies? Many will say, that is the answer, there are too many breeds in the country; it seems so easy to leave it there: but I venture to suggest that you can get, by selection and recording, a good bacon pig from almost any cross with possibly the exception of two or three, which honestly I do not consider worth persevering with for baconers. We have abundant proof of our producers getting a type with good ham. Why? Because we have done it from time immemorial. Yet how many of our pigs, even Grade A, Class 1, will compete with Danish in shoulder, where they are $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. to 2 lb. lighter than our lightest, taking everything into consideration.

This selection of pig to give light shoulder without the loss of stamina or heart room, is in my opinion an achievement that can only be attained by a stricter attention to details I have pointed out, and will not be achieved in one year's hard work and investigation.

These points are, in my mind, where our weakness lies, in getting down to a type of baconer with a light shoulder, and then making it necessary for the producer to send in his pig at a maximum weight of 200 lb. live weight, as outlined in point 4. It is not understood

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properly how much change takes place in a pig after its first stage of maturity for reproducing purposes, and 190 lb. dead weight is altogether too heavy. This is a very big handicap and is not given the attention it should have.

The question of pure bred Large White as against some form of cross, I think must be left to the actual producer as to what he can best get on with, but we must have two-thirds Large White and one-third any other breed, true to type. In my opinion the Wessex or Essex are the nearest to the type desired by the Danes.

I have seen pure bred Large Whites with appalling shoulders, from Grade A Class 1 pigs, so you will see how the type must predominate.

Another matter is the marketing of pigs. I think the time must come for all pigs to go through certain centres agreed upon, and those unsuitable for bacon, as in Denmark, should be sent forward on to the fresh meat markets, so as to get the better proportion of suitable pigs made into bacon. If there is time I will try to give you details later.

In conclusion I think there are two things most important to pig producers, that are a source of annoyance and a cause of a lot of mistrust.

I refer to the belly measurement, which I think should be done away with, and three back fat measurements introduced like the Danish. If it is a question of alteration in basic price why not face it properly, not try to evade it: evasion causes no end of trouble.

Second, the question of tolerance. This is a very vital matter to the producer who, I think, would be much better off with a lower weight in class 1 with a 10 per cent. tolerance.

There is quite a lot to be done on the factory side, and we are, at Hitchin, trying to bring the factory up to date and to the highest possible efficiency. I would like to extend on behalf of the Directors, an invitation to the factory on completion of alterations which we hope will be in about two months.