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THE RUNT PROBLEM IN LIVESTOCK

by

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THE RUNT PROBLEM IN LIVESTOCK

Are runts a necessary evil or can they be largely, if not wholly, prevented? Several hundred practical stockmen were interviewed on this subject by the United States Department of Agriculture, and according to their opinions, based on experience, the runt problem can largely be prevented.

A great variation in size of animals exists. The writer for instance has seen mature bulls on the St. Louis markets, grown in the Ozark Mountains, that would weigh scarcely over 300 pounds. At the American Royal Livestock Show, held in Kansas City, Missouri, during the same year, a 3,100 pound bull won grand championship. The name of this bull was Hartland Woodford and he was from the adjoining state of Kentucky.

Judgement of good stockmen reliable.

The farmers interviewed were stockmen with quite dependable judgments. The average run of farmers were not considered. That the people interviewed were good students of the livestock business, as well as practical stockmen, is indicated by the fact that a large percentage of them owned cattle officially accredited as free from tuberculosis. Others were cooperating with the United States Department of Agriculture in a "Better Sires - Better Stock" campaign.

Losses very great

Replied from 535 stockmen show that with even this better class of stock-raisers, there is a runting of 7 percent of the animals. These stockmen likewise estimated that the runting of their stock cut down their financial returns by 13 percent. These percentages given naturally would be considered low because of the fact that they apply to the figures given by the better class of farmers. Suppose, however, that the figures were averages for the domestic livestock, the 7 percent of the 200,000,000 domestic animals would mean that there exists 14,000,000 head of runt stock in this country. Hogs, according to 846 of these stock-raisers, developed the highest percentage of runts. The average runting of hogs was a little above 10 percent which would of course be a low average for the general run of hogs in this country.

Defective breeding and feeding are the chief causes for runts. The purebred animal has very few natural born runts in comparison to the runts born from scrub stock. On the other hand 85 percent of the runty animals become such before birth and shortly after weaning. This fact shows the significance of good feeding during the early life of the animal.

PRINCIPAL CAUSES FOR RUNTS

<u>Cause</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Inferior breeding.....	31.6
Inadequate or unsiutable feeding.....	30.4
Parasites and insect pests.....	15.1
Lack of adq̄uate housing and care.....	12.4
Contagious diseases.....	4.9
Exposure.....	2.9
Accident.....	1.0
Other causes.....	<u>1.7</u>
TOTAL.....	100.0

WAYS OF PREVENTING RUNTS

Proper and adequate feed.....	31.9
Better breeding.....	24.3
Good care and systematic attention.....	18.3
Better housing and sanitation.....	9.4
Care of dam before birth of pigs.....	5.7
Control of parasites (worms, lice, etc.).....	3.5
Control of diseases.....	1.2
Other methods.....	<u>5.7</u>
TOTAL.....	100.0

The above tables are based on the estimates of the stockmen who had reported and are an indication of the ways in which we may expect to reduce the runt problem.