

BACON PIGS.

SUITABLE CARCASES FOR EXPORT.

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At the present time there is much discussion in the Dominion regarding the export of pork and bacon pigs, and the early necessity for developing operations in this direction. It is not generally understood by breeders what are the requirements of the bacon-curers, and the type, form, character, age, and degree of fatness of the bacon pig most suitable for export. If it is the aim of our producers to capture a material portion of the immense amount of money paid for pork and bacon imported into Britain yearly from other countries, then they must supply what the ultimate consumer demands, as it is unreasonable to expect the intermediate exporter to pay a first-grade price for an unsuitable carcass. There is also a tendency among exporters to rush into this business when prices are fair without due consideration as to the requirements of the British bacon-curer. The latter knows what he wants in catering for the British consumer, and is prepared to pay a good price for select bacon-type carcasses.

What, then, is required in a first-grade bacon carcass? Firstly, type—great length of carcass, varying from 3 ft. 6 in. to 4 ft. 6 in. from the aitch-bone knob to neck; back fat evenly distributed, averaging $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. in thickness; hams not too gross; shoulders not to be heavy; and sides a nice, even width, with underline free from "seedy cut." Secondly, quality—fat to be firm and white, and lean firm but not hard. The quality of the bacon is greatly influenced by the feed used in preparing the animal for market. The injudicious feeding of large quantities of maize or beans produces a soft carcass—in trade terms called "softs"—that is, the fat is soft, of bad colour, and of an oily nature, and the lean hard and leathery. Other factors are also responsible for a large percentage of softs—namely, unthriftiness, lack of exercise, immaturity, lack of finish, imperfect feeding, undue forcing.

Why is the "select" bacon-type pig preferred by curers to the plump, full-bodied pig of the same weight? The reasons are easily explained by comparing Figs. 1, 2, and 3, which show how pigs each weighing alive about 200 lb. may yield a product entirely different. No. 1 may be described as a select Wiltshire side. This side of bacon is in appearance almost perfect. It has the required length, so that, when the ham and shoulder are cut off, the middle cuts contain the proper length, and the rest of the side a nice balance which will cut up attractively for retailers. The fat and lean are well proportioned, with the back fat about $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. in thickness, and hams and shoulders of medium weight. Contrast this with No. 2. This side if shown by itself would probably appeal to breeders as very nice-looking, but by curers and retailers it would be classed as second grade or heavy. Note the extreme shortness, heavy back fat, and the