

RATIONS FOR WINTERING PIGS.

RESULTS OF FEED-TRIALS AND OBSERVATIONAL TRIALS.

C. P. McMEEKAN, Massey Agricultural College, Palmerston North.

ON the majority of dairy-farms engaged in pig-raising the question of how best to deal with a large proportion of the late-farrowed summer and autumn litters presents many difficulties. Owing to the rapid decline at this period in the supplies of fattening dairy by-products as a result of the seasonal system of dairying practised, it is impossible to fatten to satisfactory marketable weights the whole of the pigs normally on hand. Separated milk and whey are in insufficient supply for the purpose, and, under normal conditions, the use of grain or other concentrates to the extent necessary is unprofitable. As pointed out in a previous paper—(1) The judicious and limited use of concentrates as supplements can play a material part in reducing the number of unfinished animals during this period, and especially is this so when combined with rational control of farrow dates of breeding-stock so as to fit more closely the seasonal supplies of food; (2) useful as these methods have proved, however, they have not offered a complete solution to the problems.

Fattening being out of the question, farmers are faced with a choice between either selling as weaners or light stores in the late autumn at the low prices resulting from the small demand for such animals at this time or of maintaining them through the winter months in a growing condition for sale as forward stores when prices improve in the spring, or to be fattened when milk is again available at the commencement of the new season. The latter method is associated in practice with many difficulties, and, in consequence, tends to be avoided when possible by many producers. Of these difficulties the rationing aspect is only one, but it is one upon which little definite information exists, and which becomes particularly acute during the mid-winter period when milk-supplies either disappear altogether or are required by the breeding-stock. It is apparent therefore that the problem from the rationing angle involves the provision of cheap milk-by-product substitutes suitable for the purpose. With the object of obtaining information on the suitability of certain rations in this connection, and of investigating generally the economy of the practice of "wintering," the following feed trials were conducted by the writer during the winter of 1935, together with certain observational trials carried out with large numbers of pigs under practical farming conditions. It should be emphasized that this work relates not to winter fattening, but to the practice of maintaining otherwise unsaleable pigs in a fit growing condition through a period of feed shortage.

OUTLINE OF EXPERIMENT.

Forty pigs from six litters were taken and evenly distributed between five groups so as to eliminate differences due to strain and weight. The pigs were first-cross Tamworth-Berkshires, and all had