

Which Is The Best Baconer?

Report for Third Season of Carcass Quality Scheme

THE pig carcass quality scheme was instituted in 1938 to find an answer to the question so frequently asked, "Which is the best type of bacon pig?" At first sight this question means to some only whether one of the breeds, Berkshires, Large Whites, Tamworths, or Large Black, is better than all the others, but as every breed is crossed with every other breed according to someone's fancy, the question involves not only the four pure breeds, but also all these various crosses which can be obtained from them.

A few minutes with a pencil and paper will make it clear that, in addition to the four purebreeds, there are six first cross halfbreeds, and as each one of these six halfbreeds may be put back to any of the four breeds of boar to give either a distinctive three-quarter breed or else a pig containing three breeds—for example, Large White x Berkshire x Tamworth—there can be twenty-four more kinds of pigs. Many of these three-quarter bred and mixed breed sows are used for breeding purposes, and as the identity of their progeny by a boar of defined breed is not usually obvious, these can be classed as grades. Thus, there is a total of four purebreeds, six halfbreeds, twenty-four three-quarter or mixed breeds, and four grades, that is, 38 classes of pigs that can be produced from four pure breeds. If the reciprocal crosses are looked upon as being distinct in each case, the number of possible kinds of pigs is increased considerably.

Lest confusion should arise about the meaning of "purebred" as used here, it is meant to include all animals that are known to be of only one breed. When tattooed, registered pedigree animals are classed as "registered pedigrees," but for the present they are included in the wider class of purebreeds.

Measurement of Carcass Quality

In this survey, carcass quality has been measured by the total points awarded for rate of growth, length of carcass, thickness of back fat at the

shoulder, and thickness of back fat at the loin. Quick growth is by far the most important feature of a good baconer. The rate of growth controls the amount of feed and the labour required to produce a carcass. Quick growers require less feed per pound of carcass gain than slow growers, and for this reason a maximum of 80 points is awarded for growth rate. In awarding points for growth rate the Canadian "maturity index" has been used, that is, standard age divided by actual age, multiplied by 80. A maximum of 20 points has been allowed each for length and shoulder fat, and a maximum of

12 points for loin fat. The standards recommended by the Bacon Development Board (United Kingdom), slightly modified, have been used in awarding points for these three measurements.

Altogether, 1,550 pigs have been reported on during the three years or

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operation of this scheme. In order to smooth out differences due to strains within the breeds, the month of birth, climate, and ways of feeding and treatment, it is estimated that at least 500 pigs are required in any one class.

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