



Boars should be selected on the records of their parents' performance as shown by growth rate and carcass quality in previous litters.

The standards set for growth rate and carcass quality must be kept together. It is possible, for instance, to increase the carcass score at baconer weights, provided time is taken to restrict feeding, in pigs which normally would be too short and fat to make ideal baconers. To be worthy of selection for breeding a sow's progeny should make 150lb. baconer carcasses in 200 days or less and at the same time should achieve an average carcass score of 70 per cent. with as little variation as possible. Because of the seasonal nature of feed supplies in New Zealand, some latitude in interpreting such standards is necessary. The minimum carcass score of 70 should be set rigidly, however, and latitude down to a growth rate of .70lb. carcass gain per day allowed only if growth has been over a period when food supplies were inadequate. Again, a test of one litter is insufficient and it should be possible to test one litter from each sow every year under reasonably favourable feed-supply conditions.

A more satisfactory test for New Zealand conditions would be to aim for a 90lb. dressed porker in 20 weeks (140 days) with a minimum carcass score of 70. If this growth rate and carcass score is obtained, it should be possible, with careful finishing, to obtain a fairly good baconer carcass from the same strain of pigs. Breeders interested mainly in baconer production would pay special attention to individual carcass measurements, such as of length and backfat, to ensure that the pigs they selected were breeding the right type for baconer production.

Complete Recording

Those not able to undertake complete recording could use a selection technique based on the ability of pigs to grow efficiently and to produce generally good-type carcasses. The standard for growth rate could be 150lb. liveweight in 22 weeks (154 days) and that for carcass type could be set from grading results on the

hooks coupled with an assessment of the animals on the hoof.

It would be a step forward if in the selection of gilts to be used for breeding home breeders added the growth-rate criterion (150lb. in 22 weeks) to the usual visual appraisal for carcass type, teat placement, feet and legs, etc. The ability to convert food rapidly and efficiently into meat is largely an inherited characteristic. The use of gilts which have shown that they have this trait and are from sows which have passed other tests outlined in this article should offer scope for improvement in the efficiency of New Zealand's breeding stock. The runt of the litter and the last pigs in the fattening house at the end of the season should not be the material from which future breeding stock is selected.

Management of Selected Gilts

Final selection should be made when gilts are between 22 weeks and the baconer stage. Gilts selected should be run out on pasture and fed to maintain growth rate without production of too much fat. Mating should take place at about 8 months, depending on the times of other farrowings and the overall fitting of pigs to the seasonal food supply. Gilts being selected from the fattening pens now should be grown on for mating in July and August to farrow in November and December. Pigs from litters born in May and June should be selected, on the criteria described, for mating in January and February to farrow at 1 year. May to June is probably the best time to bring new gilts into the herd.

As pigmeat prices are sufficiently attractive and the need and scope for increased production are clear, there should be no hesitation about increasing sow herds. Some indication of how this can be done most effectively from the existing stock on the farm has been given here; further assistance may be obtained from officers of district pig councils and from the Department of Agriculture.

Ruakura Farmers' Conference Week

AN opportunity for farmers to keep abreast of research work into farming problems is again given by the annual Ruakura Farmers' Conference Week, which is to be held at Hamilton this year from Tuesday, 13 May, to Friday, 16 May, inclusive. The chairman of the conference will be C. P. McMeekan, Superintendent of the Department of Agriculture Animal Research Station, Ruakura, in co-operation with the Waikato Farmers' Educational Committee.

The programme is well planned and comprehensive. It deals specifically as it has done in previous years with problems of sheep and dairy farmers, and a large part of the time will be devoted to a section for all farmers.

The opening day, 13 May, is set aside for the sheep farming section and will begin with a paper by Dr. McMeekan on the work at Ruakura. Other subjects are "Improvement of Pastures on Sheep Farms", "Pulpy Kidney in Lambs, Sleepy Sickness and Milk Fever in Ewes", "Dipping and Drenching", "The Place of Galloway Cattle on Hill Country", and

"Diseases of Beef Cattle". An open forum will be held at the end of the day, when A. Rowlands, F. C. Johnstone, and Dr. McMeekan for the meat industry, the producer, and the research worker respectively will discuss "How Beef Output Can be Increased".

The section for all farmers extends over two days, Wednesday and Thursday, 14 and 15 May, and covers a wide range of subjects. It will begin with a field day at Ruakura and will continue with papers such as "North African Phosphate Can be Dangerous to Stock", "Eucalypts on the Farm", and "Avoidable Losses in the Meat Industry".

On the last day of the conference Friday, 16 May, problems of dairy farmers will be dealt with. Dr. McMeekan will give an address on the work at Ruakura and other subjects will be artificial insemination, lifting production in low-producing herds, the eradication of tuberculosis in dairy herds, cleaning the milking machine, and recent developments in providing an efficient testing and servicing organisation for milking machines.

Bands from Wild Ducks Wanted

DRAINAGE of swamplands in recent years has reduced steadily areas where ducks can breed in New Zealand. Many farmers maintain artificial duck ponds, but under the changed conditions these are not much use to ducks unless they are fringed with dense marsh vegetation. There are signs that farmers are appreciating increasingly the need for the presence of native swamp plants about these holes if they are to keep "duck on their properties".

By banding of ducks the Wildlife Division of the Department of Internal Affairs is obtaining knowledge of how the birds react to changed conditions. The shooting season for game starts on 3 May, and the Secretary for Internal Affairs asks farmers to return any bands taken from ducks they shoot to the Controller, Wildlife Division.

Returns of bands in former years have been good. As before, each person returning a band will be given the history of the bird. Some loss of bands occurs through delay in posting them to the Wildlife Division, so the Department asks that they be returned promptly.

Winter Show Dates

THE following are dates and venues of winter shows.

- 11, 12, 13, and 14 June—Taranaki Metropolitan A. and P. at New Plymouth.
- 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28 June—Whangarei A. and P. at Whangarei.