

Producing Quality Beef from Dairy Stock

THERE appears to be an assured export market for meat, particularly beef. For this reason increased meat production is being emphasised in the Dominion's agricultural policy. Apart from the market for beef in the United Kingdom, other channels of sale which could be exploited are opening. Generally, the world is short of beef. This article, adapted from an address given at the Ruakura Farmers' Conference 1954 by P. Radford, Research Officer, Ruakura Animal Research Station, Department of Agriculture, Hamilton, describes the results of tests carried out at Ruakura with progeny of Jersey and Aberdeen Angus cattle and appraises prospects of beef production from dairy stock.

THE dairy farmer has on his farm the raw material from which to produce beef and veal. Each year the progeny of over 1,000,000 dairy cows are slaughtered within a few days of birth as "bobby" calves. The product is low-grade, low-priced meat. The major overhead cost in meat production—that of maintaining the mother during her 9 months of pregnancy—has already been paid. A substantial proportion of these mothers could be used as incubators for the production of calves with a better beef potential. Such calves would provide extremely cheap raw material for fattening, since such a method would not involve the maintenance of heavy beef-breeding cows which

would return only the value of their calves.

It is true that the specialised dairy breeds are not good beef producers. The Jersey, particularly, has a poor reputation for fleshing qualities, fat cover, and fat marbling, and suffers from the major defect of yellow fat.

Because of the national importance of the problem, however, Ruakura has been investigating the possibility of producing a saleable veal and beef quality animal from Jersey cows by crossing them with a highly improved beef breed. For this purpose the Aberdeen Angus has been selected and the results of some preliminary studies are given here.

It is obvious that crossbred stock of this type and origin may contribute to increased beef production and to increased diversification of dairy farming in varying ways. Two obvious avenues are in the production of good-quality veal and of young, light beef of 500lb. carcass weight.

In the first method the dairy farmer would employ the stock to use separated milk surplus to pig-keeping needs and sell them direct to butchers or exporters as veal. In the second he could sell the stock as weaners, runners, or stores to fat lamb farmers requiring cattle for fattening. Ruakura experiments so far have aimed at studying these two systems only.

PRODUCTION OF VEAL

In this study there were three main objectives:—

1. **Measurement** of the performance of crossbred calves in terms of rate and efficiency of liveweight gains.
2. **Assessment** of the carcass quality of crossbreds as commercial vealers.



Fig. 1—Crossbred calves 8 months old. The calves in the upper illustration were weaned at 8 weeks of age and those in the lower illustration at 18 weeks.