



Pig Producers' Council Breeding Centre

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WHAT must be regarded as something of a red letter day for the pig industry was celebrated at Korakonui Road, Te Awamutu, on 27 November, when the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. K. J. Holyoake, officially opened the new Pig Breeding Centre established there by the New Zealand Pig Producers' Council. This event marks an important stage in the fruition of the council's plans for pig improvement which, in turn, are fundamental to the development of a sound pig industry.

AS long ago as 1928 a long-term study of crossbreeding in pigs began at the Minnesota Experiment Station, U.S.A. This study gave scientific support to the animal husbandry man's preference for a crossbred animal as the basis of production where growth and meat qualities are the prime consideration.

For pigs they did more than this, showing that the first cross or hybrid sow was generally a better mother than the purebred and reared larger litters and heavier pigs. In these studies there was evidence, based on a large number of litters, that for numbers reared and feed conversion efficiency, the most profitable system of breeding was out-crossing. This is

the mating of a first-cross sow to a purebred boar of a third breed.

Practical Application of Hybrid Vigour

In 1952 the author, in a paper read to the New Zealand Society of Animal Production, referred to these findings, as well as other fundamental work, in advocating a national pig improvement plan based on the use of a first-cross sow produced from tested parents on some agreed plan, details of which would be decided on the basis of results of experiments with breeds used in New Zealand. To provide stock worthy of the good pig husbandman, it was postulated, the pig improvement work should be an integral part of the extension service to producers.

Considerable discussion took place over the ensuing year among scientists interested in the problem. Owing to high losses in purebred Berkshire pigs at Ruakura, crossbreeding with the Large White had been introduced purely as a means of producing pigs suitable for feeding experiments. This was now carried a stage further and some first-cross gilts were selected for breeding. When litter results from these gilts back-crossed to the Large White boar were available, showing that the first-cross gilts reared 9.6 pigs per litter as against 6.7 for Berkshire and 7.5 for Large White parent strains, the interest of industry leaders in this approach to improvement of pig production efficiency was aroused.

The New Zealand Pig Producers' Council and the New Zealand Pig Breeders' Association both approved a report on pig improvement policy put forward from the Waikato District Pig

HEADING PHOTOGRAPH: The Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Holyoake, opens the gates of the main drive into the New Zealand Pig Producers' Council Breeding Centre at Korakonui Road, Te Awamutu. At his left is Mr. D. J. Carter, Chairman of the Council.