

Crops for Winter Feeding of Pigs

FARMERS who intend to grow crops for feeding to their pigs next winter should be making preparations now for getting these crops in. In this article I. H. Owtram, Extension Officer in Pig Husbandry, Department of Agriculture, Wellington, deals with some aspects of this, with particular reference to maize.

THE winter of 1957 is now past, but is still sufficiently recent for memories of the problem of feeding pigs during that time to be fresh, particularly memories of the cost of buying meal. It is much cheaper and not really very difficult to grow the necessary feed on the farm, and as a crop to reduce the meal bill maize deserves far more attention than it receives at present.

Benefits of Maize

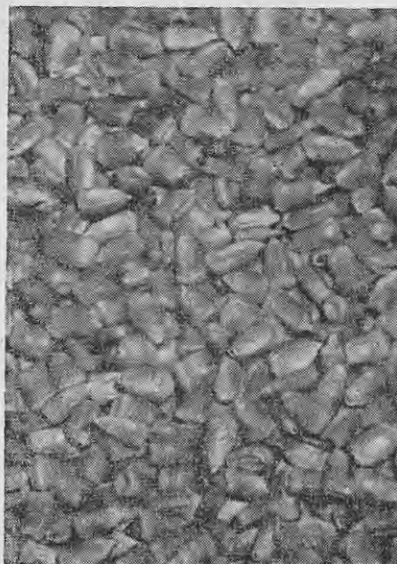
Maize can be grown satisfactorily as a grain crop for pigs over a very wide area of the North Island, and its yield per acre is such that it shows a very good return in feed produced. The area that need be grown is not large, and on nearly all dairy farms where pigs are kept there are pig paddocks that have been used for pigs for a considerable period and in which there is high latent fertility which has been built up by the pigs themselves. One of these paddocks would be entirely suitable for a crop of maize, and the labour of putting it in would not be very great.



Maize is an excellent feed for pigs.



Pfister 360 double hybrid maize.



Grains of Wisconsin 643 maize.

Because of their superiority in yield and in resistance to bad weather these two varieties should be used in preference to all other varieties.

Feeding Maize

A prevalent idea is that one of the great drawbacks to maize is the labour required to harvest it. When the crop is grown for feeding to pigs in a handy paddock harvesting labour can be almost entirely eliminated by allowing the pigs to do the harvesting themselves.

If an electric fence is used to break-feed the maize, it can be fed in this way economically and without waste. If a root crop such as fodder beet is grown as well alongside the maize, the electric fence can be used to give the pigs a portion of each crop simultaneously. When the electric fence is erected a track for it about 3ft. wide should be cut through the maize. If the maize is planted in a long and fairly narrow strip, this is not a very big undertaking.

The pigs should not be allowed free access to the crop for 24 hours a day, but should be put on to it for 4 to 6 hours daily.

The area used in each break depends on the number of pigs to be fed and on how often their owner is prepared