



Pigs feeding on maize, which can be grown satisfactorily as a grain crop for pigs over a very wide area of the North Island.

to move the electric fence. The smaller the area is, the more efficiently the pigs will clean up the maize. The use of what are known as double hybrid varieties has greatly increased the yield per acre, and a crop of 80 to 100 bushels per acre can confidently be expected.

Two to 2½ bushels of maize are required for each pig wintered, and feeding should be at the rate of about 1lb. to 1½lb. per day. From this it can be seen that an area of maize as small as ½ acre can be extremely useful to the average pig producer, particularly if it is combined with an acre of fodder beet. The crop of maize obtained will be equal to at least 1 ton of bought meal and probably more, provided proper care is given to its cultivation.

Varieties of Maize

The variety of maize used is important. Two double hybrid varieties are available, namely Pfister 360 and Wisconsin 643, and their superiority in yield and in resistance to bad weather is such that they should be used in preference to all other varieties. Certified seed of both these double hybrids is obtainable through seed merchants. In the maize-growing districts on the east coast of the North Island they are used extensively, and yields as high as 120 bushels per acre are not uncommon, and much higher yields than this have been obtained.

Preparation of Seed-bed

Comprehensive details regarding the growing of maize for grain are given in Departmental Bulletin No. 269, "Maize Growing for Grain", and the reader is referred to this bulletin. However, the following brief details of

the cultivation, sowing, and manuring of maize will be of assistance.

A good seed-bed is essential and time spent on this is never wasted and always results in a better crop. The area should be ploughed, disced, and harrowed so that a fine, firm seed-bed is prepared by the time the seed is to be sown. Small areas can be satisfactorily worked up with a small rotary hoe.

Sowing

Maize should be sown from October to mid-November, but sowing must be governed by the weather, as cold, wet soil will reduce germination and crops sown under such conditions will not mature earlier than crops sown later when soil warmth and moisture are correct.

The rate of sowing should be from 12lb. to 18lb. per acre and the seed should be sown in rows 30in. to 36in. apart. The use of a maize planter for a small area such as would be grown for pigs is hardly practical, unless such a machine can be borrowed. A small hand machine is quite satisfactory for planting, or the seed can be dibbled in by hand after the paddock has been marked by a sledge with runners 3ft. apart being drawn across it to form parallel lines.

In most districts some fertiliser is necessary to give maximum results and a dressing of 2cwt. of superphosphate and 4cwt. of blood and bone manure per acre is recommended. If the maize is being grown in a paddock in which pigs have been running for some time, it is extremely unlikely that there will be any shortage of nitrogen.

Maize normally takes 10 to 14 days to come through the ground, and as weed seedlings germinate much more quickly, the ground should be harrowed parallel to the rows about 8 days after sowing. As soon as the maize seedlings are above the ground it should be harrowed again lightly.

Weed Control

After this second harrowing weeds can be controlled by spraying and this should be done as soon as the weeds are again above the ground. The earlier the weeds are sprayed the more efficient will be the kill and the less likelihood there will be of damage to the maize plants. The amine salt of 2,4-D is recommended for spraying. The rate of application depends on the size of the weeds and growing conditions during the season. If the season is moist and growth rapid, rates as low as ½lb. acid equivalent per acre will effect a good kill, but if the topsoil is dry and weed growth slow, as much as ¾lb. to 1lb. will be required.

A combination of maize and fodder beet fed out in breaks with the aid of an electric fence is an ideal way of providing feed for pigs in those three awkward months of winter. This method deserves considerably more attention than it is receiving at present, particularly from farmers in the northern half of the North Island. The majority of dairy farms in that area have a patch of land somewhere suitable for growing it and the use of one or more of the pig paddocks for this purpose would enable the farmer to profit from the fertility the pigs have built up.