

# Cattle Raising in the Americas



WHEN the United States ceases to be an exporter of beef and pork from whence will Europe get its meat?

Will the United States, with its large ratio of increase in population, with which the meat production by no means keeps pace, be able in the future to feed itself?

Must Europe and the United States curtail their meat consumption?

There is no need to take a pessimist's view in answering any of these questions. The meat proposition is already serious, it is true; but this is because we are at the turning of the ways and not because the immediate future, or even the future for some hundreds of years at least, presents any real difficulty to the solution of this proposition.

Leaving out of consideration all questions involving the so-called meat trust, the tariff, etc., and looking at the matter simply as a question of economy in meat production, there is no need to fear a famine, nor ought there to be any fear of high prices to limit the consumption.

A number of factors enter into the world's present meat problem, one of the most important of which is the change in conditions under which meat has been produced in the United States. The change from range to farm production of beef cattle and the improved shipping facilities for corn, which latter has revolutionized the hog industry, have together upset the balance in the meat market. Unlimited free range on government lands made cheap meat, but the taking up of these lands by settlers, and particularly the taking up of land around water sites has changed the whole situation. The extension of railways and an improved service has given the western farmer a choice, either to sell his corn or to feed for meat, where formerly he had no choice; it was either hogs or cease raising corn. He raised hogs because he was forced to it, and he bought range beef cattle to put them in condition for the market by feeding for a few months with a part of his surplus grain.

The raising of cattle on the free ranges of the west was the cheapest method of meat production at the time practised in the United States, but it is a question whether beef may not now be produced, and is not now produced by a few farmers, even cheaper than on the western ranges in the past.

The poor quality of range meat, which necessitated several months of farm feeding and care in order to be gotten in condition for the market, the great losses in the herds due to insufficient food and water, and the lack of winter shelter made the business of cattle raising on the western plains a more or less uncertain and precarious industry. It was an exotic, and as such it will die with changing conditions.

The future of meat production in the United States is a farming proposition, and like all other questions connected with the national agriculture depends for its satisfactory solution upon the improvement of farm methods. To remain a meat-exporting country, lands must be brought up to the European standard of production. At that standard, or even considerably below, farming in the United States pays, and pays well, and in no way better than by turning grass and grain into meat. But until the United States adjusts itself to the changed conditions and can again enter the European market as a competitor with Argentina, Uruguay and Australia for the meat trade, where will Europe, and even the United States, should it have a temporary need for meat, secure their supplies?

The answer to this question is not difficult. It is only surprising that it has not been more fully recognized.

The broad plains of Mexico and Central America, of Venezuela and Colombia, the Amazon region of Brazil, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador rival, if they do not exceed the famed pampas of Argentina and Uruguay as cheap meat-producing districts.

In the country of the Orinoco alone, Venezuela and eastern Colombia, there is an area of territory more than equal to France, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark, or ten times the size of the state of New York, which has its superior as a cattle country in no part of the world, if indeed it has anywhere its equal.

Mexico offers many advantages to the stock raiser. The conditions there are those with which stockmen from the United States are more or less familiar, which last fact, in part, accounts for the large investments of American capital made in this industry within the last few years in Mexico. Cattlemen own the land in large tracts of from 100,000 to 1,000,000 acres, acquired from the government by grant and at a very low figure. This prevents the shutting off from water, which has done so much to destroy the range industry in the United States. The winters are mild and there is no danger of loss from blizzards—in fact, the grazing is good all the year round.

The character of the ranges on the Pacific coast side in Jalisco, Michoacan, Guerrero, southern Oaxaca and Tepic are similar in character to the northern ranges but not so well watered, and the grass is scantier.

On the gulf side there are entirely different conditions. On the slopes of the eastern Cordilleras in the states of San Luis Potosi, Tamaulipas and northern Vera Cruz is the region known as the Huasteca Potosina, the country of the Tamesi, Panuco, Temporal and Tamasunchale rivers. This is an almost ideal grass country. It is a succession of valleys separated by grass-covered terraces or hills increasing in height from the low plains near the coast to the borders of the central plateau 6,000 feet. This slope receives the moist breezes from the Gulf of Mexico in the form of rain during the summer months and dew in winter, and is always free from frost, drought and excessive heat. The natural pasture of this country is as fine as any in the world, except on the Oronoco and in the upper Amazon country. Cattle in good condition can be sent to market at a cost of less than \$10 a head. On the northern and western ranges lean cattle cost to produce from \$2 to \$5 a head and can be fattened for market to cost in all about \$10 a head.

The latest Mexican statistics show about 4,250,000 beef cattle in the whole country, of an estimated value of about \$8 gold per head. Chihuahua and Vera Cruz lead with about 469,000 head for each state. As compared with Argentina with its 30,000,000 beef cattle it can be seen that Mexico is but at the beginning of the industry; in fact, as present the country produces but little meat above its own needs, yet it could, on natural pasture alone, carry twice the number of cattle now grazing in Argentina, and could easily supply to the European markets from its surplus an amount of meat twice what the United States has even been able to supply from its surplus.

South of Mexico in Central America and in parts of Mexico not above mentioned there is yet another cattle country, where the climate is more tropical. On the Pacific side the area suitable for cattle is limited. It is similar to the Pacific slope of Mexico, but the country is more thickly settled, a larger proportion of the land is devoted to agriculture,



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