

# ALFALFA GOLD BONDS

The following article on Hogs and Alfalfa from The Dakota Farmer, of Aberdeen, S. D., to whom we are indebted for the use of the accompanying cuts, gives facts and figures of much interest to our readers.

By Alfred Wenz, Brown Co., S. D.

The following is a statement of the sales of Duroc Jersey red hogs grown in an alfalfa pasture on the Wenz farm this season:

1 fat sow, 315 lbs., @ \$7.75,	\$ 24.41
2 young boars . . . . .	30.25
15 young sows, 2192 lbs., @ \$10.00	\$219.20
18 shoats, 3004 lbs., @ \$7.75,	232.81
9 shoats, 1470 lbs., @ \$7.60,	111.72
17 shoats, 2400 lbs., @ \$7.40,	111.60
14 shoats, 2269 lbs., @ \$7.25,	164.50
	<b>\$960.49</b>

Most of the pigs were farrowed in April, a few in March and May. The average size of the litters was 9.6, while the average number raised per litter was 7.7. Well founded fears of lower prices drove them to market early, and the average age when sold was 6½ months. The average weight was 156.17 pounds, the average price was \$12.48 per head. This foots up a mighty good return on a capital of \$185.00, the value of 11 brood animals at the end of last season. The pigs, with the help of the pasture, have well earned the name, "Alfalfa Gold Bonds." The 10 sows have had nearly eight coupons each to clip in one year, good for \$12.48 apiece, making a total of \$96.05 in coupons from a bond with the face value of \$15.50.

These hogs picked probably half their feed from 9½ acres of alfalfa.

The following facts will show why one-half seems a fair and conservative estimate. The pigs were not pushed with grain and mill feed; rather were they left as much as possible to the alfalfa. The experiment was carried on not to grow a huge hog irrespective of cost, but to build a good market hog at the lowest expense, making alfalfa bear the brunt of the work. Not how heavy an animal but how wide a margin of profit on capital invested in brood sows and grain feeds was the end sought, though weight was not lost sight of. The amount of feed given the sows was cut down radically when they were turned from the farrowing pen into the pasture, and, after weaning time, no feed other than alfalfa was the rule. Besides, all the sows but one are being held over and so do not figure in the proceeds from sales, except indirectly as they nourished the growing pigs. But they had the bulk of their living from May to October from this same pasture. The young sows, sold at 10 cents, were turned off before fattening for market commenced, hence the larger share of their weight must be credited to the alfalfa. In the spring the little pigs lost no time in learning to forage; they were at it as soon as they could get to it. Daylight, sometimes 4 o'clock in the morning, found them grazing. If extreme heat kept them in the shade during the afternoon, they would make up for lost time by working in the grass till 9 or 10 o'clock at night. They were fed soaked and ground corn in a separate pen, but even before being weaned they did not come around for feed till late in the forenoon, when they were given a light ration. At night they had more, but they never displayed the wild squealing eagerness for feed so common in yard fed hogs. After being turned into a



W. H. Wenz Entertaining the Sire of the Duroc Pigs that Converted Alfalfa into Gold Bonds.

field of corn, part of which was choice sweet corn, they still kept coming back to the alfalfa. This was a remarkable demonstration of their fondness for it, while their thriftiness and quick growth showed that their taste had a good physiological basis. They were in prime physical condition when they went into the yard for high feeding, and only a few weeks of this was necessary to put on the lard finish. Hog experts who have seen the herd and noted the conditions under which the pork has been grown agree that one-half is not too high an estimate of feed to credit the alfalfa. Some think it should be higher. The hogs, up to one-half their value, can fairly be considered the crop of the alfalfa land.

One-half the sales, \$960.49, is \$480.25. In addition, the pasture yielded 8½ tons of hay, worth \$127.50, making a total of \$607.75 produced in pork and hay on 9½ acres of land—and produced, too, without turning over a hand, as far as the land was concerned, except to gather the hay. \$63.14 from each and every acre; better than six percent on a valuation of \$1,000 per acre—no wonder alfalfa land is said to be worth \$100 per acre.

There are many advantages in raising hogs on alfalfa. It is easier for the farmer and better for the hogs than yard feeding. The porkers do a good share of the work, thus saving the farmer many chores and getting exercise for themselves as well. Then there is no worry about a balanced ration; the growing alfalfa comes very close to furnishing that, and corn, usually the cheapest and easiest feed to put into the trough, can be given freely in addition. Corn alone will not do for growing pigs, but can be fed with splendid results when they are rustling on the alfalfa. Their free active life combined with the fact that the bulk of their nourishment is in the form of this succulent forage prevents the corn from having an unhealthy or unduly fattening effect. The hog is naturally a ranging and grazing animal, and the more naturally he lives the healthier and thrifter he will be. It is easier and better to let him hunt up most of his own living and to throw him over some corn twice a day than it is to pamper him like a spoiled youngster kept close to the house. The same thing is true in winter feeding of brood animals, the hay then taking the place of growing plants. Alfalfa and corn will make swine grow like work and worry to the owner.

Another advantage is economy. There is an old saying that a ton of alfalfa is equivalent to a ton of bran. Which is cheaper, to pay \$20 per ton for the bran and go to the expense of hauling it, or, at a cost of not to exceed \$7.50 per acre for seed and labor, to establish a permanent sod which will without further attention produce every year from 1½ to 4 tons of bran per acre that the pigs can go out and gather for themselves? Consumers complain of the high price of pork and often assail the "trust". Yard feeders retort that at the prices obtaining for feed during the past few years they must get a good figure from the butchers or go out of business. The alfalfa feeder is under no such constraint. He is producing a good share of the food very cheaply and turning it into pork at slight expense. When high prices prevail he is that much ahead, and he can still make good interest when the market is on a level actually below the cost of production to the yard feeder. Look at it in another way. Joseph E. Wing, perhaps our greatest authority on alfalfa, says that the hay is worth \$15 per ton to the feeder. The amount of green forage necessary to make a ton of the hay is surely worth no less. Grow it and let the pigs pick from \$20 to \$30 worth of feed from every acre without a cent of expense other than interest on the value of land and fence. Where can you find anything to equal it? Try to make your land produce in some other crop that much cash with enough more to cover expenses of production. Only by means of intensive cultivation and hard labor can it be done.

But the direct profits are not all. There are indirect benefits as well which help to increase the returns from the land. A large herd of hogs scatter considerable manure over the pasture. Thus they fertilize the soil they are picking part of their living from, and the manure is applied before it leaches or burns, and without the aid of pitchfork or spreader. Alfalfa itself is a fertilizer and it improves the soil by means of both chemical and mechanical action. The plants not only add nitrogen, to the plant food supply, but the enormous roots in their burrowing and crowding act as subsoiler. After the sod is turned, the dying roots become rich storehouses of humus and nitrogen, deep reservoirs to catch and hold the falling rains. Alfalfa is unselfish; in its life it gives far more than it takes and in its death it leaves a splendid heritage in fertil-

ity to the soil. Land growing this marvelous plant is a bank paying heavy interest and at the same time increasing the principal, and this with no risk to the investor.

There are other patches of alfalfa on it, and more will be planted from year to year. Should the unlikely happen and the hogs ruin the sod, they will be turned into another pasture of the same kind. Then the first will be plowed up—the finest corn land in the county. That is the proposed rotation anyway, swine mown alfalfa followed by corn and wheat. Permanent improvement of the farm is the end sought, and the experience above related shows this possible and profitable by utilizing the humble hog and giving him a chance to lead the simple life, ranging in freedom and content over fields of glorious alfalfa.

But someone says, "You will hurt and perhaps kill the grass by pasturing it." The experience on this farm does not support the contention. Last year 35 hogs ran on 1¼ acres of yearold sod till snow, chewed it off level with the ground, and succeeded in killing a few square rods in one corner where they spent most of their time when not grazing. This year 85 hogs ran on 9½ acres, all but the original 1¼ acres of which was only a year old, the plants hardly established, and it does not appear that it is injured. The sod has gone into the winter in as thrifty condition as one could wish. This has been an extreme test, especially in a season like the one just past—unnatural warmth in very early spring giving plants a premature start, later two killing frosts, one of which cut down the alfalfa after it had attained a height of 8 inches, and a growing season probably the driest we have ever had. The fact is, the returns of \$63.14 per acre are not to be considered large. The pasture in a normal year when the plants have become established will make a better showing. Last year the alfalfa was credited with having produced only one-third the feed for the 35 hogs, as they were kept considerably later into the winter. Otherwise figuring the returns on the same basis as this year, the 1¼ acres of alfalfa produced in pork and hay at the rate of \$119.28 per acre.

But admit that pasturing might in time kill out the alfalfa. Let it. 9½ acres is only a small part of 160, and this combination of hogs and alfalfa is not alone for a big check representing much profit on market day, but also for a better and more productive farm.

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