



## THE CARCASS GRADING OF HOGS

**D**UE to the sharply increased wartime demand for Canadian bacon, the proportion of the total hog production required for export has reached exceptionally high figures. In order to maintain the pre-war quality of Canada's exports, further improvement in carcass quality and market weights and finish of our hogs is required. Only about 28 per cent of the total hogs graded at the present time make A Grade carcasses, and less than 60 per cent of these A Grade carcasses are of weights suitable for sizeable Wiltshire sides (55-65 lb.) the preferred weight range on the British market.

The production and export of large quantities of bacon with pre-war quality maintained, was written into the Agreement with the United Kingdom, and constitutes an obligation which is in every way to the best interests of the Canadian swine industry. We occupy our present strong position due to war conditions which have temporarily eliminated competition in the United Kingdom market, and pre-war quality will not be good enough when peace comes if we are to maintain first place in volume and price against the product of Continental Europe. Recognition of the possible vulnerability of our position in the future makes it necessary to take every practical measure which will ensure a more uniform and higher level of quality than now obtains.

In order to justify the production of better hogs, finished at correct weights, the producer must be paid for them according to their quality. Price for quality in market hogs is best determined after they are slaughtered and hung for grading on the rail. Rail grading is a better yardstick of quality than live grading. On the rail, the exact carcass weight can be determined and the conformation, proportion of fat to lean, thickness of back fat, and the quality of the belly readily and accurately ascertained.

For these reasons carcass or "rail" grading of hogs has been adopted by the Dominion Department of Agriculture as the official system, and has been in effect from September 30, 1940.

There is a distinct advantage to the producer of good hogs in selling on dressed weight, since by this system he receives credit for every pound of pork his hogs yield. Under the live weight system, the price is based on the average yield of all hogs, with the result that high yielding hogs make no better returns than low yielding hogs.

The following paragraphs are designed to familiarize the producer with carcass grading.

by Authority of Honourable J. G. GARDINER, Minister of Agriculture, Ottawa.

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**Identification.**—The first step in rail grading is to properly identify each hog by tattooing. This is done with a rotary tattoo instrument and indelible ink especially designed. Drivers and shippers use this tattoo equipment at the shipping points to identify their hogs for rail grading. If hogs are delivered by truck direct to a stockyard or packers yard, tattooing may be deferred until their arrival at the destination. In this event, hogs should be plainly marked with scissor clips or tar and the grader at the stockyards or abattoir advised that such hogs are not tattooed. They will then be tattooed at the destination before slaughter. In either case the farmer should insist that the shipper or his agent makes a correct record showing:

1. The farmer's name and address.
2. Number of hogs.
3. Tattoo number or other identification.

This information is to be supplied to the grader at the destination of the shipment.

**Carcass Grading Certificate.**—The grader issues an official certificate covering each farmer's lot of hogs carcass graded. This may be in either of the following forms:

1. A statement supplied to the shipper or sales agency showing the grading for each farmer's lot of hogs in the truck or car. Under this system the shipper, sales agency or packer makes out an individual grading statement for each farmer.
2. An individual carcass grading certificate for each farmer's lot of hogs made out by the grader and made available to the farmer through the shipper, sales agency or packer. The use of this system is being expanded as facilities permit, but in any case *the farmer should look to his shipper or trucker for a prompt grading report.*

**Statement of Settlement.**—Each farmer is entitled to, and should demand, a statement from the shipper, sales agency or packer. This should show the following:

1. The official carcass grading.
2. Weight of the carcasses.
3. Price per cwt.
4. Premiums and deductions due to grade.
5. Any other deductions such as freight, trucking, and commission.
6. Net amount of settlement.

In some cases, as a matter of convenience, such statements are combined with the official carcass grading statement. In such cases the grader certifies to the grade, and the buyer to the computation of settlement.

**Deferred Settlement.**—Carcass grading may involve some delay, but usually not more than one day, in issuing settlements. Hogs arriving by truck, however, are often rail graded and paid for on the day of arrival.

Where a farmer desires, he can usually arrange with the buyer for an advance payment at the time the hogs are delivered. The grader issues the official grading reports immediately following the slaughter of the hogs.

**Price Differentials between Grades.**—Premiums on "A" grade are determined and maintained by arrangement between the trade and the producers, with the Department supporting the agreement. Deductions on undesirable grades are also established by negotiation in the trade and are based on supply of and demand for the various qualities. Deductions may vary according to time and place, and to avoid misunderstanding, the farmer should ascertain what deductions are in effect at the time he sells his hogs.



**Settlement According to Carcass Weight.**—The weight which is used as the basis of settlement is a matter entirely separate from grading; for instance hogs may be sold on live weight and carcass grade, or on carcass weight and carcass grade. Whether hogs are sold on live weight or carcass weight must be determined between the buyer and the seller, although many buyers are now offering to purchase hogs on dressed weight only.

There is no fixed spread between live weight price and dressed weight price. The live weight price is usually from 73 to 75 per cent of the dressed weight price. This varies according to the average yield of the hogs from the district concerned, and also as to whether the farmer or buyer pays the delivery cost on the hogs.

Farmers selling hogs on the dressed weight basis should have a clear understanding with the purchaser regarding the above points.

**Accurate Carcass Weights.**—In order that carcasses may be graded accurately according to weight, the Department requires that all abattoirs be equipped with scales suitable for weighing each carcass to the exact pound. Most plants are now using automatic registering scales which eject a printed weight ticket for each carcass. These scales are checked daily by the official graders, and the scale operators must be satisfactory to the Department.

This means that, when hogs are sold on dressed weight, the farmer is assured of receiving credit for the exact weight of his carcasses.

All grade weights are warm dressed weights and include head, tongue, leaf lard, kidneys, tenderloins, backbone, feet and tail.

**“Cold” Weights.**—On some markets price quotations for dressed hogs may be based on what is termed “cold” weights. This means a deduction, usually of three per cent, from the “warm” or grade weights which is the normal shrinkage if hogs are chilled. Quotations based on “cold” weights should be proportionately higher. Cold weight prices are issued by some packing plants in order to compete with dressed prices on local city markets, which naturally can handle only chilled or shrunk pork.

**Scale Tickets on File.**—The original record of the identification, weight, and grade for each carcass is to be found on the scale tickets, and these tickets are kept on file under the supervision of the grader for a period of ninety days after the hogs are slaughtered, and are available for a re-check if such is requested.

**Applicable to all Methods of Marketing.**—The system of carcass grading and sale on carcass weight is designed so that it does not disturb any of the established methods of marketing. It can be applied whether hogs are delivered by truck or railroad, to public stockyards or packers' yards. The carcass system merely involves a delay of a few hours in the grading and weighing until the hogs are hung on the rail as dressed carcasses.

**Overfeeding Avoided.**—Under the carcass weight system, there is no advantage in stuffing hogs to increase the live weight. This results in the hogs arriving in better general condition and in a saving of feed. Hogs should be given only normal feeding before shipment.

**Additional Information Obtained.**—Carcass grading provides information regarding disease, bruising, and ridglings or “stoners”. Disease and bruising are not factors in making settlement to the producer, but losses suffered by the industry from these causes are reflected in the general price level of hogs. Information on these matters is proving valuable to the farmer since it enables him to take steps to remove such defects from his herd.



**Co-relation of the Carcass to the Live Hog.**—A study of the weight and measurement specifications of the various carcass grades as outlined in the Carcass Grading Regulations will enable the farmer to properly interpret his carcass grading reports. By weighing the live hogs before shipment, the dressed yield can be determined. The grade specifications reveal the back fat and length of carcass measurements for the grades into which the carcasses were placed. This information can be used to advantage when further hogs are being fitted for market.

### Corresponding Carcass Weights for Various Weights of Live Hogs at Various Yields

Live Weight	Carcass Yield 70 per cent	Carcass Yield 75 per cent	Carcass Yield 80 per cent
180 lb.	126 lb.	135 lb.	144 lb.
190 "	133 "	142 "	152 "
200 "	140 "	150 "	160 "
210 "	147 "	157 "	168 "
220 "	154 "	165 "	176 "
230 "	161 "	172 "	184 "

Sizeable Wiltshires—55 to 65 lb.— are definitely preferred in the export market, and these weights can be cut only from carcasses weighing 143 to 168 lb. While Wiltshires of other weights are exported, they are much less desirable and are subject to discounts.

A reasonably safe weight range for live hogs of average yield is 190 to 210 lb. The weight to aim at, however, is 200 lb.

Close attention to the weight of market hogs will yield the producer many extra dollars in immediate returns and also contribute to the improvement of the position of Canadian bacon on the British market.

*Prepared by the Live Stock and Live Stock Products Division, Marketing Service, Ottawa.*