

LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION

The Corn Belt is a major region in American food production. It is particularly important in the production of livestock for meat. In 1954, 69.7 percent of all hogs and pigs sold, 28.2 percent of all cattle and calves sold, and 21.3 percent of all sheep and lambs sold by commercial farms in the United States came from the Corn Belt. In addition, it produced 31.4 percent of all chicken eggs sold, and 20.7 percent of all milk sold by commercial farms. Most of the corn, oats, barley, and hay produced there is fed to livestock in the region, but large quantities of these feed crops, especially of corn and oats, are shipped out of the Corn Belt to be fed to dairy cattle, poultry, and other livestock in other regions of the country.

KIND AND NUMBER OF LIVESTOCK

Cattle and calves.—There were 22.9 million head of cattle and calves on commercial farms in the Corn Belt in 1954 (table 68). This was approximately a fourth of the United States total. Cattle and calves were distributed throughout the belt on all types of farms; somewhat more than half of the number were found on livestock farms, about a fifth on cash-grain farms, and the remainder on other types of farms. The heaviest concentration of cattle and calves was in the Western Corn Belt, which accounted for about a third of the total number.

A little more than a third of the cattle and calves in the Corn Belt were cows, but less than half of these were kept for milk (table 68). The large proportion of calves and other young stock, as well as the proportion of cows kept for raising calves but not for milk, reflects the emphasis on cattle kept for beef production. Milk cows were relatively most numerous in the

Northern and Eastern Corn Belt and most of them were on dairy farms.

A large proportion of the cattle fed on Corn Belt farms are calves and yearlings bought from the western range country. These young cattle are bought usually in the fall of the year and are kept for 3 to 15 months, during which time they are fed for additional growth and finish, to be marketed as fat heifers or steers. The length of time these feeder cattle (as they are called) are fed depends upon the supply of hay or other roughage and pasture available on the farm to which they are brought for fattening.

On farms where most of the land is level and practically all used for crops, with little or no hay or pasture (as on many farms in the Central Corn Belt), the feeder cattle are fed mainly corn and protein-supplement feeds for a period only long enough to obtain a good finish at a relatively rapid gain in weight. On the other hand, on farms that have a surplus of pasture or of hay and pasture, the feeder calves bought in the fall are generally fed mainly on roughage (hay, corn fodder, or oat straw, for example) through the winter, and mainly on pasture through the following summer, after which they are placed in the feed lot and fed mainly on corn and oil meal for a few months. They are then marketed as prime or choice fat cattle.

The size of the cattle-feeding enterprise, or the number of cattle fed on a farm, is flexible. It often varies considerably from year to year on a particular farm. An important factor affecting the scale of feeding operations is the supply of corn or other feed available and this varies from year to year with the volume of crop production, which in turn is affected by weather and other production conditions. Other major factors are the relative prices of feed grains, feeder cattle, and finished cattle. The anticipated market price of hogs, compared with that of cattle, is also a principal consideration to the farmer who weighs the alternative methods of marketing his feed grain.

Beef breeding herds are found usually on farms that have a large proportion of rolling or rough land or other unutilizable land that is kept in pasture or hay. Many such farms are found in the Corn Belt, especially in the southern and western parts. On these farms beef cows are kept for the primary purpose of producing calves; the calves are raised and fattened mainly on feed grown on the farm or they may be sold to other farmers for fattening. On some farms where calves are raised from beef cows on the farm, additional calves or young feeder cattle may be purchased, to be fed and fattened for market.

In 1954, cattle and calves were reported on 88.5 percent of all the commercial farms in the Corn Belt (table 69). The number of farms reporting ranged from about 82 percent in the Eastern Corn Belt to about 92 percent in the Western Corn Belt. Even among the cash-grain farms, 78.4 percent reported cattle and calves. Cows were reported on 82.9 percent and milk cows on 69.6 percent of the commercial farms. The difference in percentage of farms reporting milk cows and those reporting all cows is only a partial indication of the proportion of beef-breeding farms, as many farms with primarily beef herds had one or more milk cows for producing milk for home use or for sale. Also, the difference in percentage of farms reporting cows and those reporting any cattle and calves does not fully indicate the proportion of farms having feeder cattle only. Some farms had, or would have feeder cattle at some time during the year even though they did not have them on the dates of the Census enumeration.

TABLE 68.—NUMBER OF SPECIFIED LIVESTOCK ON COMMERCIAL FARMS, BY TYPE OF FARM, IN THE CORN BELT AND COMPONENT REGIONS: 1954

Region and type of farm	Horses and/or mules	All cattle and calves	Cows ¹	Milk cows	Hogs and pigs	All sheep	Chickens ²
	1,000 head	1,000 head	1,000 head	1,000 head	1,000 head	1,000 head	1,000 head
Total Corn Belt:							
All commercial farms.....	451	22,908	8,719	4,158	36,654	5,424	110,369
Cash-grain farms.....	95	4,438	1,909	850	5,048	1,068	28,448
Livestock farms ³	235	13,521	4,399	1,434	25,366	3,498	45,225
Eastern Corn Belt:							
All commercial farms.....	60	3,173	1,323	848	6,401	1,200	19,433
Cash-grain farms.....	15	746	332	195	1,036	322	5,236
Livestock farms ³	21	1,362	455	173	3,997	602	4,942
Central Corn Belt:							
All commercial farms.....	70	4,993	1,658	768	11,138	1,231	25,219
Cash-grain farms.....	21	1,261	522	222	1,850	330	8,210
Livestock farms ³	36	3,070	842	316	7,950	773	10,948
Northern Corn Belt:							
All commercial farms.....	62	3,438	1,378	1,026	6,100	736	21,080
Cash-grain farms.....	10	467	195	122	644	142	4,603
Livestock farms ³	27	1,750	567	337	3,617	428	7,794
Western Corn Belt:							
All commercial farms.....	131	7,352	2,534	860	8,306	1,137	26,508
Cash-grain farms.....	28	1,336	559	198	919	140	6,676
Livestock farms ³	79	4,980	1,520	376	6,380	887	13,692
Southern Corn Belt:							
All commercial farms.....	129	3,952	1,825	656	4,708	1,120	18,128
Cash-grain farms.....	21	629	301	113	599	134	3,722
Livestock farms ³	71	2,360	1,016	232	3,423	807	7,849

¹ All cows, including heifers that have calved.

² Chickens 4 months old and over.

³ Livestock other than dairy and poultry farms.