

# GENERAL EXPLANATION

## Background

American settlers, from the first days in Jamestown to America's last frontier, experimented with livestock and poultry that were adaptable to the area and would find a ready and profitable market. With countless acres of land suited only to growth of grasses and millions of acres more of land of only marginal value for crop production, utilization of this land, which is best performed by animal production, assures the place of livestock and poultry in the overall scheme of our American economy.

A periodic enumeration of farms is necessary in order to determine animal inventories, sales of livestock and livestock products, and characteristics of the farmers engaged in livestock production. This enumeration is useful in determining the direction and magnitude of trends in the livestock industry as well as geographic shifts in the production of the various types of animals. This part of volume II provides explanatory text and tables dealing with livestock inventories and sales in 1974 together with historical comparisons with data for other census years.

Animal production is one of the largest segments of American agriculture and will probably continue to be so in the future. Meat and meat products is now the preferred food in the human diet and will also probably be so in the future.

The sale of livestock, poultry, and their products accounted for approximately 41 percent of the value of all agricultural products sold in 1974. This represents a decrease from the 1969 level of 63 percent (table 1).

**Table 1. Value of Agricultural Products Sold: 1954 to 1974**

	Total agricultural products sold (mil. dol.)	Livestock and livestock products sold	
		Total (mil. dol.)	Percent
1974.....	81,531	33,302	40.9
1969.....	45,607	28,525	62.5
1964.....	35,292	18,841	53.4
1959.....	30,493	17,059	55.9
1954.....	24,645	12,292	49.8

For the most part, this decrease was due to one or a combination of the following factors:

1. Higher prices for grain sold, curtailing its use as feed and, thus, livestock and poultry sold.
2. Generally lower prices for cattle and hogs sold, curtailing their sale.
3. Higher wages and energy rates, which decreases the existence of livestock and poultry enterprises.

Farms with sales of \$2,500 and over accounted for 98 percent of the value of sales of livestock, poultry, and their products. On these farms, 489 million acres, or 54 percent of the acreage counted as land in farms, was used for pasture. Hay was produced on an additional 52 million acres, and 93 million acres were used in the production of feed grains. At least 70 percent of the acreage on farms with sales of \$2,500 and over was used in the production of animal feed.

The total value of sales by type of livestock, poultry, and their products indicates the relative importance of the various types of livestock. Totals for farms with sales of \$2,500 and over in 1974 are shown in table 2.

Increased specialization and concentration in livestock and poultry produc-

**Table 2. Sales by Type of Livestock or Product: 1974**

Farms With Sales of \$2,500 and Over	Sales	
	million dollars <sup>1</sup>	Percent
Total.....	38,925	100.0
Cattle and calves.....	18,301	47.0
Dairy products.....	8,194	21.1
Poultry and poultry products.....	6,191	15.9
Hogs and pigs.....	5,395	13.9
Sheep, lambs, and wool.....	448	1.2
Other livestock.....	396	1.0

tion can be recognized by comparing the number of farms producing a specific kind of livestock or poultry with changes in the number of animals or poultry being produced. Rates of decrease in the number of farms producing each major kind of livestock and poultry are detailed in table 3. Percentage decreases in the proportion of farms producing some kinds of livestock have been more rapid than for others. For example, in 1940, 79.4 percent of all farms reported cattle and calves and 76.1 percent had milk cows on the place. By 1974, 65 percent of all farms still had cattle and calves, but the proportion of farms with milk cows had decreased to 17 percent from 21 percent in 1969. Since 1940, the proportion of farms with hogs and pigs decreased from 61.7 to 20.3 percent. Farms with chickens 3 months old or older continued to show the greatest proportional decrease of all. They declined from 84.4 percent of all farms in 1940 to 13.7 percent in 1974.

Although the total number of farms producing livestock decreased from 1969 to 1974, those producing large numbers of livestock increased. Farms with small herds or flocks have accounted for most of the decrease. The rapid decrease in milk cow, hog, and poultry enterprises