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Nebraska Cattle Grub Survey¹

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The scarcity of data on the actual extent of cattle grub infestation in Nebraska became evident during the winter of 1942-43 when a control program was being organized. Although there were some cattlemen who were acutely aware of the losses occasioned by this pest, there were many others who had given the problem little thought or who believed that infestation resulted largely from the importation of feeder cattle. More detailed information was obviously desirable in order to present an accurate and convincing account of the problem to the cattle growers.

Because of the many difficulties involved in the examination of large numbers of cattle on the range, it was considered more practical to examine cattle shipped to the packing plants in Omaha, and then to determine the location of the cattle at the time they became infested with grubs. Swift & Company, The Cudahy Packing Company, Wilson & Company, Armour & Company, various commission firms, and the National Live Stock Loss Prevention Board cooperated in the project. The hide cellar foreman of each packing company, whose experience had well qualified him for such an undertaking, kept records during February, March, and April on cattle grub

infestation of all lots of animals which had been maintained intact from the time of arrival at the stock yards until slaughter. The ownership of each lot of these cattle was then traced from the packer through the commission firms to the cattle feeder. Correspondence with the cattle feeder in some cases revealed the location of the cattle at the time infestation occurred. In many instances, however, the tracing of the origin of the cattle was too complicated to be practical. In spite of the difficulties associated with this procedure, it proved to be an inexpensive method of securing definite infestation records.

Records were obtained on 826 lots of cattle representing 26,776 different animals. Of these, 22,787 or 85 per cent were infested, *i.e.*, harboring at least one grub; 16,389 or 61 per cent were grubby, *i.e.*, harboring five or more grubs. Not a single lot of cattle was free from infestation.

Among the animals slaughtered at Omaha packing plants were included cattle which were on pastures in various parts of the Middle West and West during the previous season when adult flies were depositing eggs. In view of this fact the above data, taken as a whole, can be assumed to represent the average infestation for cattle shipped to Omaha without reference to place of origin. It was definitely determined, however, that 60 lots which included 1843 cattle, representing all sections of the state, were obtained directly from Nebraska farms and ranges. Among these, 92 per cent were infested and 64 per cent grubby.—8-26-43.
