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The Relation of Good Roads to the Livestock Industry.

By Thos. H. MacDonald

The livestock industry is one of the heaviest contributors to the traffic which moves over the improved roads that are now being built in the United States at the rate of 40,000 miles a year. On the basis of a traffic census conducted by the Bureau of Public Roads in Connecticut it is estimated that 90,000 tons of dressed meat are transported over the roads of that one State annually. On a single main road of the State in one month the one-way movement of meat products amounted to 334,000 pounds, the average haul being 43 miles. In this State dressed meat constitutes nearly 3 per cent of the total tonnage of commodities transported by highway.

Last year 300,000 head of livestock were delivered to the Kansas City Market by motor truck. At St. Joseph, Omaha, Sioux City, East St. Louis, Indianapolis and other markets, the drive-in trade is developing fast, and will grow to larger and larger proportions as the roads are improved.

As a result of the improvement of the roads and the convenience of the motor truck many people living at points more or less remote from the railroad now find it possible to have fresh meat as a part of their regular diet rather than as an occasional luxury.

From the standpoint of the shipper of livestock the improved roads have distinct advantages over the railroads for the short haul.

A farmer living 35 miles from Kansas City finds that hogs shipped by motor truck to the market shrink during the entire journey no more than they formerly did between his farm and the railroad shipping point. Shipping by truck, he gets his stock to market from 12 to 24 hours sooner than he possibly could if he still depended upon the railroad. Formerly he began loading a railroad car in the afternoon and, if he was lucky, he reached the market by 9 or 10 o'clock the following morning. Now he loads at 3 o'clock in the morning and reaches the stockyards within three or four hours, in plenty of time to water and feed his hogs before the market opens.

I mention these facts to show the direct interest of the livestock industry in the improvement of roads not only as an aid to production, but also as a very material factor in the marketing and consumption of your product.

In the construction of roads to meet the increasing need for them the Federal Government through the Department of Agriculture is playing an important part. Since 1916 the Government has been participating with the States in the construction of what are known as Federal aid roads the cost of which are paid on approximately a 50 - 50 basis by the States and Federal Government. Under the Federal highway act of 1921 a policy has been laid down and a program established which will give the country as a whole a connected system of main highways, consistently improved, in a much shorter time than many of you realize.

The Federal aid highway system, provided for by the act, as finally designated by the various State highway departments and approved by the Secretary of Agriculture includes something less than 180,000 miles of interstate and intercounty roads forming a network that covers the entire country. Practically every city of 5000 population or more will lie directly on the system and all will be connected with it by improved State or county roads, as will the great majority of smaller cities.

It is estimated that in the thickly settled States of the East and Middle West not more than 5 per cent of the population will live further than 10 miles from one of these roads, and in the West the highway will be brought as close as possible to every individual of the scattered population.

Already more than 28,000 miles of Federal aid roads are completed and over 15,000 miles are under construction, these being nearly 60 per cent complete on September 30. The completed mileage is growing at the rate of nearly 10,000 miles a year, and as the Federal law provides very definitely for continuous maintenance there is every assurance that these roads built with Federal cooperation will constitute a wise investment of the public funds which will return dividends to the tax payers who pay for them, to those who use them daily for business or for pleasure, and to no group in greater measure than to the livestock industry.