

PART VI

Livestock, Dairying and Poultry

General Importance

Livestock and poultry raising is the most important farming activity of Pierce County. In 1954 about 58.4 percent of all farm products sold were derived from livestock and poultry. The value of all animals and animal products marketed was \$7,089,260 compared with \$4,891,753 received for all the crops sold. Poultry and poultry products alone made up over 28.5 percent of the farm commercial sales. Pierce County ranked third in 1954 among Washington counties in the value of farmers' sales of poultry and poultry products and was seventh in dairy products.

Livestock Trends

Measured in numbers and types of animals, livestock raising has changed considerably since 1920. The value of livestock is over twice that of 1920, being \$1,349,417 in 1920 and \$3,450,780 in 1950. All cattle on farms increased from 25,500 head in 1939 to 31,000 in 1956. A most marked trend is the increase of beef cattle--from 1,600 to 12,500 head during the interval between 1939 and

Total Value of Pierce County Livestock: \$3,450,780

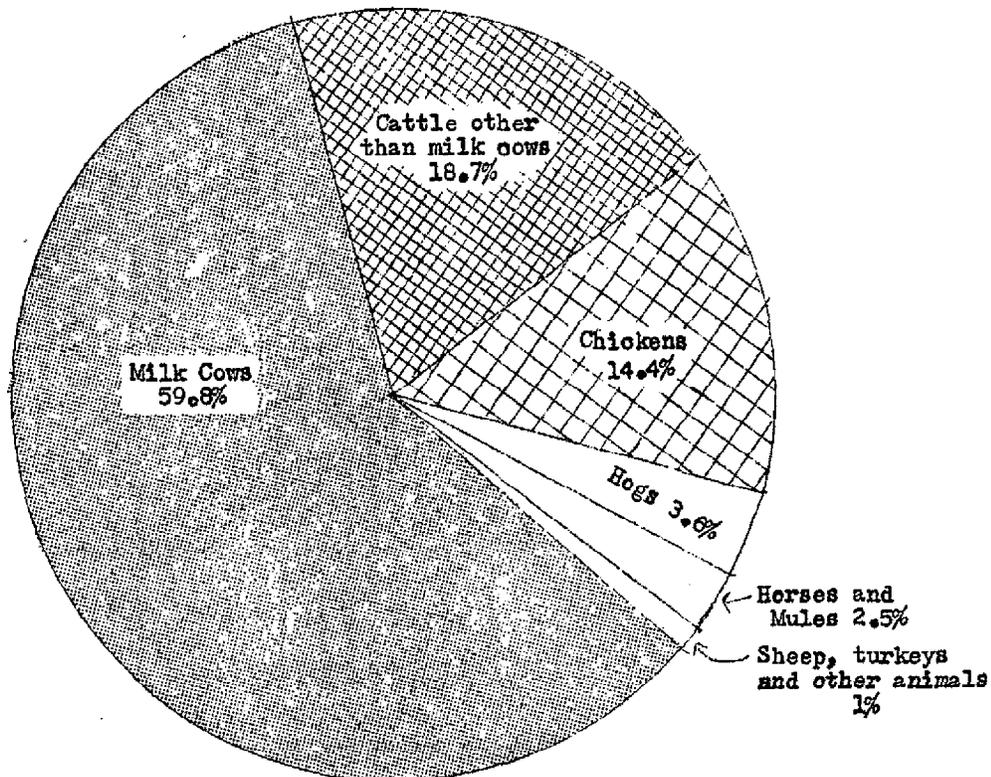


Figure 12.- Value of Livestock on Farms
Pierce County, 1950.
(Based on U.S. Census, Agriculture)

1956. In the same period dairy cattle and milk cows decreased considerably. Compared to 1920, livestock farmers have decreased their interest in hogs, horses and mules. Since 1939 poultry raising, both chickens and turkeys, and commercial egg production have increased.

Cattle: Dairy and Beef Farming

Dairy and beef cattle are major sources of farm income in Pierce County and make up a large part of the assessed value of farm property. Cattle are raised on nearly three-fourths of the farms. In the last Census enumeration, cattle accounted for 78.5 percent of the value of all livestock.

Milk cows, based on an average of \$123 per animal in 1950, were valued at \$1,662,100. While milk cows numbered less than in 1939, the volume and value of milk and dairy products was higher in 1954 than in 1939. This indicates a general improvement of dairy stock producing higher yields of milk per herd. Milk cows and dairy cattle reached their highest number in the World War II year of 1943 when fluid milk markets in the Puget Sound area were at a high-demand point. From 1949 to 1954 dairy cattle declined but began to increase again in 1955 and 1956. The county continues to hold a high position in western Washington dairying because of its good marketing location. Pierce County ranked sixth in the state in value of dairy products, and ninth in numbers and value of milk cows according to 1954 Census figures. In 1954 dairy products sold amounted to over \$2,766,000.

Table 23.- Cattle on Farms
Pierce County, 1939-1956

Year	All Cattle (head)	Beef Cattle ^{1/} (head)	Dairy Cattle (head)
1939	25,500	1,600	17,100
1940	26,000	1,800	17,200
1941	26,700	1,900	17,500
1942	27,000	2,000	17,800
1943	27,300	2,100	17,900
1944	27,500	2,200	17,500
1945	27,700	2,400	17,000
1946	24,500	2,100	15,900
1947	24,600	3,100	15,000
1948	23,900	3,400	14,100
1949	24,000	3,700	14,000
1950	23,200	3,800	12,700
1951	23,000	4,600	12,200
1952	23,400	5,900	11,500
1953	26,700	8,700	11,700
1954	28,500	10,800	11,500
1955	30,400	11,900	12,000
1956	31,000	12,500	12,400

^{1/} Beef cattle includes some calves for vealers and dairy type steers.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, AMS,
Agric. Estimates, State of Washington,
1939-1956.

A recent and increased emphasis on raising beef cattle is a noticeable feature of the livestock industry. Beef cattle numbers started rising in 1940 and continued during the war and post-war years when beef prices and markets were strong. From an estimated 1,800 head in 1940, numbers rose to a high of 12,500 head by 1956. Many livestock farmers changed from dairy animals to beef types. As beef cattle increased, there was a related decrease in dairy stock. Factors which favored increased interest in beef raising were the good demand and prices for beef, the fewer hours of labor required compared to dairying, and the smaller investment in equipment necessary to produce beef compared to fluid milk. Pierce County farmers following part-time work adopted this practice. Beef breeds were efficient users of grass lands, woodland pastures and cut-over land browse common to most parts of the area.

Poultry Farming

From the standpoint of dollar value of products sold from farms, poultry raising is the leading type of farming. Sales of eggs, broilers, turkeys and other poultry returned an estimated \$3,464,648 to Pierce County farmers in 1954. The number of chickens kept on hand for egg production has ranged between 400,000 to 550,000 birds, while egg production has been between 4 and 5 million dozen per year. In recent years chickens and egg production reached a low figure in 1950 of 397,000 chickens and 4,109,000 dozen eggs sold. The Census of 1954 recorded a peak of about 547,000 chickens and sales of 5,511,000 dozen eggs. Eggs are commercially produced on over 800 farms.

Some Pierce County poultrymen specialize in growing broilers (fryer chickens) and pullets and hens for markets in the Tacoma urban area. In 1954 the county ranked second in the state in chickens sold. A total of 1,302,000 chickens were sold from 570 farms for the freezer and fresh meat markets. Fryer chickens sold numbered 988,500 and 71 farms specialized in this business.

Turkey raising has increased since 1939. In the 1950-1954 period, 70 or more farms together have raised about 29,000 turkeys per year. Most of the turkeys raised are the heavy breeds for the holiday market. About 25 farms in Pierce County keep turkeys for breeding stock and egg production.

Table 24.- Chickens, Egg Production, Turkeys
Pierce County, 1939-1954.

Year	Chickens (birds)	Egg Production (dozens)	Turkeys Raised (birds)
1939	436,250	5,103,978	16,684
1944	440,478	4,496,916	27,319
1949	397,142	4,104,380 ^{1/}	29,386
1954	546,839	5,511,159 ^{1/}	28,992

^{1/} Eggs sold by farmers; does not include eggs consumed on farms.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Hogs

Pierce County is one of the important areas of Washington in the raising and marketing of hogs. It ranked sixth in the state in 1954 with 5,062 head located on 552 farms. Hogs and pigs were sold from 190 farms indicating that many farms were keeping hogs for meat consumed on the farm. Interest in hogs increased to a high of 7,023 head in 1945 as a result of war-time demands for pork. It declined to 5,062 head in 1954, and has followed a general trend in western Washington of lower numbers of hogs and pigs.

Reasons for the decline are mainly related to higher costs of feeding hogs. In earlier years many farmers kept hogs to utilize skimmed-milk left from cream separators. In recent years nearly all milk has been shipped in wholemilk form. Many of the present farms specializing in hogs use garbage waste from cities, towns and institutions and purchase grain for finishing the animals for market. There has also been a decline in farm butchering of hogs and preparing home-cured ham, bacon and sausage.

Table 25.- Hogs, Sheep, Horses and Mules
Pierce County, 1939-1954

Year	Hogs (head)	Sheep (head)	Horses and Mules (head)
1940	4,249	3,187	2,451
1945	7,023	1,565	2,606
1950	5,509	1,071	1,751
1954	5,062	1,567	1,196

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Horses, Mules, Sheep and Other Livestock

Horses and mules for farm-work purposes and transportation have decreased in the last 30 years. Tractors, trucks and other machines have replaced these animals. Most of the present horses are used for pleasure riding and packing in the forest recreation areas of Pierce County. Rarely are teams of horses used for farm work or logging--a picture which was commonplace prior to 1925. Among western Washington counties Pierce is second to King in numbers of horses. This indicates the popularity of horses for recreational riding on suburban farms which operate stables. In 1954 there were 1,196 horses, colts and mules being kept on 578 farms. Only fifty-five of these farms made sales of horses and colts.

Sheep raising has decreased by nearly two-thirds since 1939 when there were 3,187 head. Sheep reached a low number of 1,071 head in 1950, then increased to 1,567 head in 1954. Recent trends in sheep raising have been a reduction in the size of flocks. In 1939 there were 3,187 head on 62 farms, averaging about 50 head per farm flock. In 1954, 1,567 sheep were raised on 130 farms averaging about 12 head per farm. In 1954 wool was shorn on 62 farms and the total lamb crop was about 500 head. Factors which have discouraged larger-scale sheep raising are long, wet winters, heavily wooded ranges, predatory animals, and labor required for herding and fencing.

Beekeeping and the raising of goats, rabbits and fur animals are minor livestock farming specialties. Much lower than in 1920, there are about 1,300 hives kept on 165 farms which produced 43,500 pounds in 1950. Pierce County is third in the state in sale of goat milk, rabbits and fur-bearing animals. About \$82,000 worth of small animals and their products were sold in 1954.