

PART VI

Livestock, Dairying and Poultry

General Importance

Livestock and poultry raising is the most important farming activity of Thurston County. In 1954 about 78 percent of all farm products sold were derived from livestock products and poultry. The value of all animals and animal products marketed was \$3,136,330 compared with \$643,200 received for all crops sold. Dairy products worth \$1,394,000 made up over 37 percent of the farm commercial sales. Thurston County ranked thirteenth in 1954 among Washington counties in the value of dairy products sold and was twelfth in poultry and eggs. In hogs kept on farms Thurston ranked eighth and was seventh in turkeys raised.

Livestock Trends

Livestock raising and other animal industries have changed considerably since 1920. The value of livestock kept on farms is over three times that of 1920, being \$1,083,300 in 1920 and \$4,182,000 in 1954. Since 1939 there have

Total Value of Thurston County Livestock: \$4,182,900

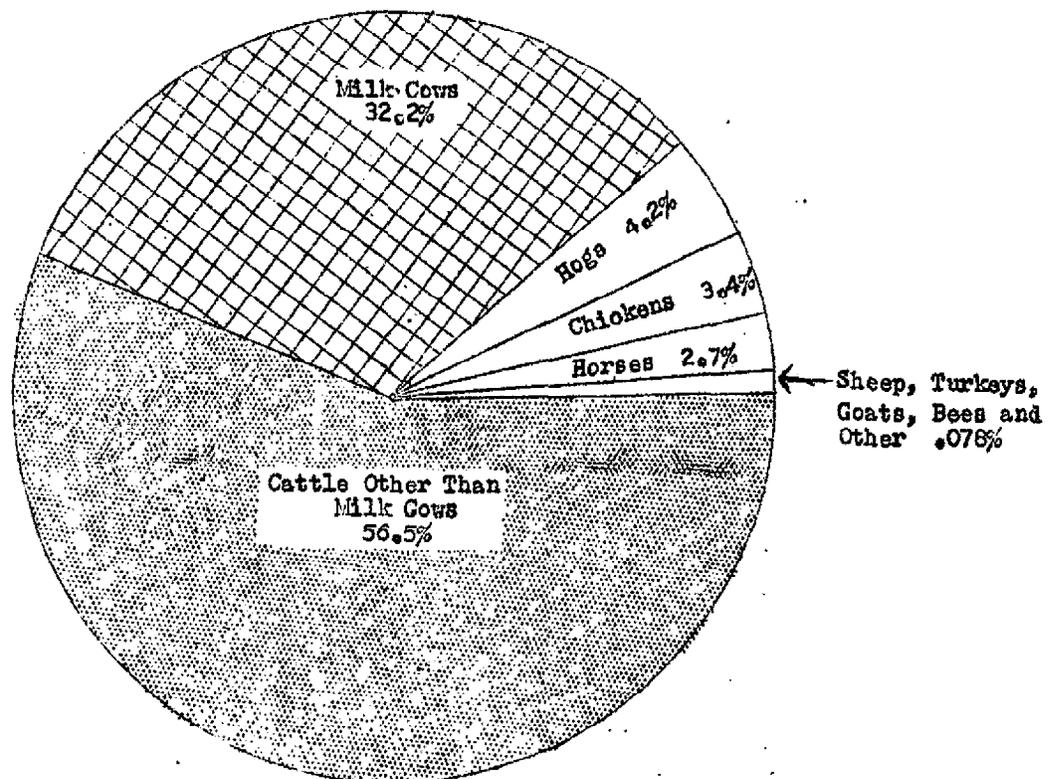


Figure 11.- Value of Livestock on Farms
Thurston County, 1954.
(Based on U.S. Census, Agriculture)

been important changes in the numbers of different types of livestock found on Thurston County farms. The cattle population has gone up about 30 percent -- from 17,100 head in 1939 to 22,000 in 1956. A most marked trend is the increase of beef cattle -- from 2,000 to 9,700 head during the same period. There have been increases also in hogs, chickens and turkeys and slight decreases in sheep and goats.

Cattle: Dairy and Beef Farming

Dairy and beef cattle are major sources of farm income and make up a large part of the assessed value of farm property in Thurston County. Cattle of either dairy or beef breeds were reported on over 1,500 farms in 1954 which was nearly 90 percent of all the farms in the county. Cattle made up over 88 percent of the total value of all livestock and poultry in 1954.

In recent years there has been a change from dairying to raising of beef animals on many farms. About 200 fewer farms were selling whole milk in 1954 than in 1939. Dairy cattle, since the peak of 16,500 head in 1942, declined to 12,300 head in 1956. Beef cattle have been increasing and reached a peak of 9,700 head in 1956. This indicates that some small-scale milk producers abandoned dairying and at the same time have expanded the raising of small herds of beef cattle which require less investment in equipment and fewer hours of labor than dairying. Hardy breeds such as Herefords and Angus are able to forage well in the woodland pastures of the glacial plain prairies and in

Table 24.- Cattle on Farms
Thurston County, 1939-1956

Year	All Cattle (head)	Beef Cattle (head)	Dairy Cattle (head)
1939	17,100	2,000	15,100
1940	16,900	1,900	15,000
1941	17,800	1,800	16,000
1942	18,000	1,500	16,500
1943	18,200	2,900	15,300
1944	18,200	2,900	15,300
1945	18,300	3,000	15,300
1946	16,600	2,100	14,500
1947	15,800	2,100	13,700
1948	14,900	3,200	11,700
1949	15,000	3,600	11,400
1950	15,300	3,800	11,500
1951	15,000	4,300	10,700
1952	16,500	6,500	10,000
1953	19,000	7,900	11,100
1954	19,700	8,300	11,400
1955	21,500	9,500	12,000
1956	22,000	9,700	12,300

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

Cascade and Coast Range foothills. The labor-saving factor and the ease with which beef cattle fits with part-time farming is a major reason for a change-over from dairying in favor of beef livestock farming.

Cattle are distributed quite generally over the glacial plain lowlands of Thurston County with dairy cattle tending to be concentrated in the districts with higher yielding soils. The lower Misqually Valley flats and bottom land districts have the largest dairy herds. Upper Chehalis Valley lands in the Rochester and Little Rock areas also have numerous dairy cattle. Most dairy herds tend to be small, having 10 to 20 animals. Beef animals are more common in the Yelm, Lacey, Tenino and Bucoda prairie districts and are generally in small farm herds of less than 30 head.

Table 25.- Dairy Products Sold From Farms
Thurston County, 1939-1954

Year	Whole Milk Sold From Farms		Cream Sold From Farms		Butter Sold From Farms	
	(pounds)	(dollars)	(pounds)	(dollars)	(pounds)	(dollars)
1939	18,983,090	\$ 379,960	678,860	\$169,715	1,157	\$347
1944	31,064,490	931,935	272,740	136,370	930	510
1949	27,891,638	1,106,454	113,955	72,840	1/	--
1954	25,694,719	1,467,461	49,391	26,671	--	--

1/ No data available.

Source: U.S. Censuses of Agriculture, 1939-1954.

Poultry Farming

Poultry raising is second to dairying in the agricultural economy of Thurston County. Poultrymen received a gross cash return of \$966,050 during 1954 and nearly half of this was for eggs. However, poultry farming has been declining in recent years. In 1954 there were 225 less commercial poultry producers than in 1949. In 1949 there were 600 farms which sold eggs but by 1954 only 450 farms sold eggs, and commercial egg production was smaller by 45,000 dozen per year.

Although egg laying flocks have decreased there has been an increase in farms raising broilers (fryer chickens) and turkeys. Turkey raising was reported on 91 farms in 1954 compared with only 48 in 1949 and the number of birds produced went up from 35,700 to over 56,000. During this time, Thurston County became one of the leading turkey raising areas of western Washington and gained a rank of seventh in the state. The raising of fryer chickens has expanded. In 1954 Thurston County ranked ninth in the state in broiler production and the Census reported 20 producers who turned out 240,000 fryer chickens or an average of 12,000 fryers per farm.

Ducks, geese and other specialty types of poultry farming have declined in recent years. Farms keeping ducks numbered about 115 and only about 1,000 birds were found throughout the county in the 1954 Census.

Table 26.-- Chickens, Egg Production, Turkeys
Pierce County, 1939-1954

Year	Chickens (birds)	Egg Production (dozens)	Turkeys Raised (birds)
1939	141,053	1,456,009	24,516
1944	155,612	1,385,844	32,431
1949	117,767	1,184,329 ^{1/}	35,745
1954	145,222	1,140,681 ^{1/}	56,092

^{1/} Eggs sold from farms; does not include eggs used on farms.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Total Value of Poultry and Poultry Products Sold
in 1954 - \$966,050

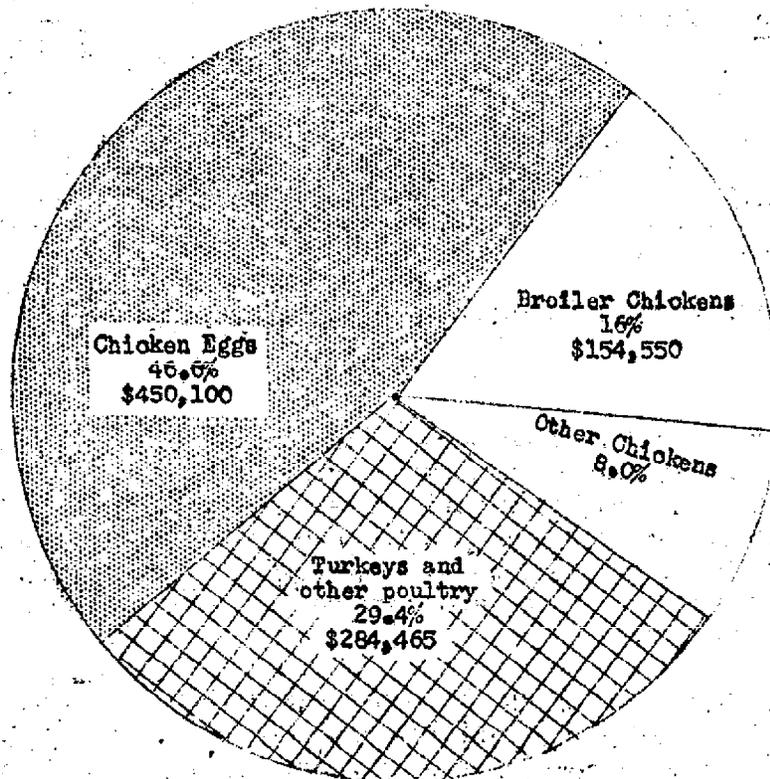


Figure 12.-- Divisions of Thurston County Poultry Industry
By Products Sold in 1954
(Based on U.S. Census, Agriculture)

Hogs

Thurston County is an important area within the state in the raising of hogs. It ranked seventh in 1954 with 4,437 head located on 280 farms. Hogs and pigs were sold from 95 farms in 1954 and 4,300 head were sold for slaughter and as feeders. A few farms in the Yelm and Nisqually districts keep large droves of feeder hogs and use garbage from the Fort Lewis Military Reservation.

About 80 percent of all the hogs are in the northern one-third of the county. The peak number was 5,037 head in 1944. This was related to the heavy mobilization of military personnel at Fort Lewis. The scale of hog raising has gone down since the war years but still is above pre-war levels. Hogs raised on general farms and on dairy farms for home use has been declining since the 1930's. Home butchering and curing of pork products is far less common than it was in 1920 and earlier.

Table 27.- Hogs, Sheep, Horses and Mules
Thurston County, 1939-1954

Year	Hogs (head)	Sheep (head)	Horses and Mules (head)
1939	3,090	1,570	2,100
1944	5,037	1,267	1,656
1949	3,607	1,263	1,254
1954	4,439	1,125	755

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Sheep

Sheep raising has been slowly declining in the last 15 years and reached a low of 1,125 head at the time of the 1954 Census. While sheep have actually gone down in numbers, the number of farms keeping small flocks has increased from 40 to 60 since 1950. Farm flocks in 1939 averaged 44 head, but in 1954 averaged 18 head. In 1954 over 8,000 pounds of wool were shorn and 790 lambs and ewes were sold. Sheep are generally distributed over the prairie lowlands, with the largest number being raised in the Yelm, Rainier and upper Nisqually Valley districts. In the Yelm area there were six farms with a total of 263 head (44 head per flock) enumerated in the 1954 Census.

Horses

Horses and mules for transportation and farm-work use have decreased by nearly two-thirds since 1939. Tractors, trucks and other machines have replaced horses. Most of the present horses are used for pleasure riding. Rarely are teams of horses used for farm work or logging--a picture which was commonplace prior to 1925. By 1954 there were only 755 horses, colts and mules being kept on 336 farms and only 50 farms were using horses for work power. Horses were well distributed over the farming districts but the largest numbers were in northern Thurston County near Olympia, Yelm and Lacey kept in riding and boarding stables and on suburban farms.

Small Animals and Bee Keeping

In part-time farming the raising of small and specialty animals and the keeping of bees are important. Goats (primarily dairy goats) numbering 314 were kept on 64 farms at the time of the 1954 Census. Domestic rabbits were raised on 200 farms and 20 farms raised fur-bearing animals. Rabbitries, mink and chinchilla fur farms are mainly in the Olympia and Yelm districts. Bee keeping has declined greatly since 1920, when there were over 1,800 hives located in Thurston County. By 1950 there were only 155 hives in production.