Livestock Farming

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Livestock farming is an extensive commercial agricultural activity that involves the raising of domesticated animals for the produciton of meat and byproducts (leather, wool) over vast geographic spaces typically located in semi-arid climates, like in the United States west of the Appalachians and east of 98° west longitude and in much of Europe from France to Russia.

Characteristics

Most distinctive characteristic is its integration of crops and livestock. Most of the crops are fed to animals rather than consumed directly by humans. In turn, the livestock supply manure to improve soil fertility to grow more crops. Livestock farms permits farmers to distribute the workload more evenly through the year. Livestock requires year-long attention. And products can be sold throughout the year.

Farmers feed livestock with grazing and giving them feed. When a farmer feeds his livestock, he tries very hard to feed them things that help them grow. He adds vitamins, minerals, and protein so that the animals stay healthy. Farmers will figure out how much of each ingredient the livestock should have. Sometimes cereal grains are added so that the livestock produce better or more beef. Cattle have bodies that can take grazing food and make it into the protein it needs.

Depending on what kind of livestock it is, farmers give them places to live. Sometimes it is in a building that has its temperature controlled and sometimes it is just a place where they can get out of the rain. Since farmers began to 'design' their herds, the animals have become a little weaker and can't take very bad weather conditions like they used to years ago.

Livestock farming is widespread throughout much of western North America, South America, southern Africa, western Asia, and Australia. One interesting practice in livestock ranching is called transhumance. Transhumance is the seasonal movement of livestock between different ranges. In many regions, livestock are moved into the mountains in the summer and then down into the valleys in the winter.

Animals and Uses

Some of the animals might be cattle/dairy cows, chickens, goats, hogs/pigs, sheep, and horses. There are other kinds of livestock animals that one might not think about. These are: donkeys, mules, and rabbits. Bees are raised for their honey. All kinds of fish are raised on fish farms. Livestock gives consumers their meat, eggs and milk. We also use the skins leather and hair of some animals for blankets, clothing, shoes, and brushes.

Some livestock organs are used for medicines like insulin. Hoofs and horns are used for buttons, combs, glue and knives. Manure from these animals will be used to make plants grow better.

Upon the mention of livestock, one will think of include beet cattle, hogs/pigs, goats, sheep, and horses. Dairy cows can be found in the dairy farm area and chickens can be found on the poultry farming. They were separated because they are a large part of livestock and needed more space.

Breeding

We were surprised to see that livestock farming is well planned. We didn't know that farmers 'design' their herds of animals by deciding which characteristics are good ones. To make it easier to understand, we will use an example. Let's say that Ginny is the best cow that the farmer has because she is from a good family and has given birth to other great cows. The farmer will take the best things about Ginny and pair them with Hector, the bull. Hector will be chosen because he has other qualities like a good family and good beef. The combination will make a calf that has qualities from Ginny and Hector. The farmer will even have another cow be pregnant with Ginny and Hector's calf, if Ginny has had her limit or needs time off from being pregnant. This is selective breeding. There is much more planning and thought in cattle production than we ever knew.

Livestock can be mated in three ways:

1.Randomly—by putting a few males and a few females of one species in a pen and allowing them to mate with whichever one they want.
2.Inbreeding—by mating animals that are closely related. They pick two that are related and have really good genes so that the baby will have them, too.
3.Crossbreeding—by mating unrelated animals. Sometimes these animals are of different breeds.