

Animal Husbandry Notes.

COPRA AS A STOCK FOOD.

The methods used in the processing of green copra are not standardised and therefore the composition of the finished product is variable. However, an average composition on a dry basis is as follows:

	Per cent.	Per cent.
Fat-Oil	60	— 70
Water	6	— 10
Protein	5	— 7
Carbohydrate ash and fibre ..		15

Associated with the high fat content is a correspondingly high energy value, giving copra a food value (on an energy basis) twice as great as the food value of maize.

The water content of the copra is important because on it depends the quality of the processed product. The green copra may be dried by one of three methods, hot air, sun or smoke, but whichever is used, it is desirable that the water content is reduced to about 5 per cent., otherwise fungal growth and subsequent breakdown of fats to fatty-acids give rise to rancidity.

Free fatty-acids may also reduce the value of copra as a food by acting as pro-oxidants, thereby bringing about the oxidative inactivation and destruction of Vitamins A and D.

Finally, fatty-acids, if present in large quantities, may form insoluble calcium soaps which are assimilated with difficulty.

The protein content of the food is comparatively low and this should always be remembered when feeding copra to live-stock, particularly to sheep and cattle. Moderate amounts of copra with high fat content fed to stock in the presence of small amounts of protein and carbohydrate may create metabolic disturbances resulting in ketosis.

It is recommended to grind before feeding out, but this is often impracticable owing to the high fat content. However, by mixing the copra with a cereal such as Sorghum in the proportions 25 per cent. copra to 75 per cent. grain, the grinding is facilitated and ketosis avoided.

Copra as a Food for Pigs.

Pigs become sleek and lively if fed on copra but if fed in excess they may be sickened by the fat. Pigs have been known to eat as much as 2lbs. of copra per day, but this is considered too much, 1lb. for a pig exceeding 100lbs. body weight and ½lb. for a pig less than 100lbs., being more desirable.

Young pigs may not take to the copra immediately but this can be overcome by introducing a little into the ration long before it is really required, say at the litter stage.

In the case of both young and old pigs, the copra can be fed either soaked in water or directly from the bag. Whichever is used it is desirable to add about ½lb. of a protein-rich food such as meatmeal.

Influence of Copra on Carcase Quality.

There is a general fear that copra will taint bacon and give the fat a tendency to rancidity, but the properties of coconut oil are such that on fundamental grounds one would not expect these things to happen. So far, the reports on cured bacon are satisfactory, the fat is white, harder than usual, and free from any taint. However, for the present, it is advised that copra be fed to young and growing pigs and the grain which would have been used, fed to the finishing pigs.