

## Honest Packer Who Four Percents Lambs Wouldn't Water Ham

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MERTZON — Now that this ranch has a sheep-working hog, the commercial end of the pork business has become more interesting. Every time I've been to the grocery store lately I've found new enthusiasm for the displays of sausages and hams.

Don't misunderstand; I'd never think of allowing our talented herding pig to suffer the fate of her less glamorous relatives, yet owning an interest in one hog does make us feel closer to the industry.

The merchandising of pork has made great gains. In particular, cured meats have improved. Meat packers have pulled off miraculous feats for the dieters by adding a dash of artificial smoke and a spot of imitation pink coloring to their process. Where man once allowed himself to become a shameful glutton over rich, smoke flavored meat, today even a hopeless food addict can resist the new ham without ever activating his taste buds.

The packers have also learned to add 10 percent water to a full sized ham. Thus, unlike the old days when Grandma had to walk clear across her kitchen to draw water to make ham gravy, the jet age cook can count on enough sealed-in liquid to make several bowlfuls of gravy and still have enough left over to feed the dog.

Naturally there is a group of old tightwads unkind enough to accuse the smokehouse operators of adding the water merely to increase the profit margin. Given half a chance to sound off, these incurable nitpickers make an awful fuss babbling wild things about how a full bench of the Supreme Court plus all the dissident groups on campus ought to condemn such practices.

If these critics were better acquainted with the meat companies they'd know that water is a mighty touchy subject around the plants. Right here on this ranch, buyers from some of the largest meat outfits in the country have thrown fits about a waterfill on a string of fat lambs like they thought a four percent shrink delivered in Chicago would be fair weighing conditions.

The ones who used to come by here thought a mutton wasn't ready to weigh unless he was as dehydrated as a sun-blistered prune. It was normal for the figuring of the shrink to take up the backs of four or five weight sheets. After one of these pencil shrink sessions the smoothest-tongued lawyer in Dallas couldn't put forth one reason that a packing plant would even allow a water faucet for their employes, much less let anyone squirt water into a ham.

No, they can't tell me that the men who bellow long and loud at the mere sight of a sheep drinking from a mudhole would ever, ever consider such a thing for even the briefest moment.

City folks are awfully tricky but old Captain Hook himself was never caught watering down his sailors' rum.

The new administration should act on this problem and reassure these swivel-jawed types before the thing gets out of hand. Think how terrible it's going to be if these same parties ever get to worrying about what's added to lunchmeats.

But, then it's not our fight. Red Rose (that's our trained hog's given name) and myself will make out just fine even if the ham sellers have to run a pipeline from Niagara Falls. That's because we're going to make Madison Square Garden if it cripples us both.