

Also, the availability of cheap pork from other states contributed to the lack of interest in developing better hogs.

The first improved breed to really create interest among producers was the Berkshire, first imported to Georgia about 1830. But most farmers found this breed required too much management and care so it had limited success. Although producers continued to be skeptical, in 1843 a committee on livestock at the State Agricultural Fair recommended the Berkshire as a satisfactory breed for Georgia.

Another attempt at breed improvement was made with the importation of the Essex hog in the 1850's. These animals were moderate in size and did not require an unusual amount of care, as did the early Berkshires. They also were suitable for open range. However by the time of the Civil War, there still were only isolated cases of improved herds in Georgia. The methods of breeding and care used by most farmers were still too haphazard to realize success with improved breeds.

Due to the attention and acreage devoted to cotton production, most Southern farmers had not raised their own hogs and other subsistence crops. This resulted in a shortage of pork and other foods during the War. The common belief was that livestock profits were higher when production expenses were low. Because the price of animals was low and they could forage for most of their food, any increase at all was considered profit. Farmers felt there was little reason to devote time and money to improving livestock when they could concentrate their efforts on growing cotton.

Although some new livestock improvements were made, attempts to build a solid industry in the state were limited from 1865 through 1900. During this period, practically nothing was done in regard to hogs other than increasing the total number.

After the destruction of the state's cotton crop by the boll weevil in the 1920's, efforts were intensified to diversify Georgia's agriculture. This caused many farmers to take another look at raising swine profitably.

During the twentieth century the state's swine herds advanced considerably. The razorback became less popular and more farmers began using improved breeds to raise a meatier type hog capable of producing large and healthy litters. Other factors, such as high wartime meat prices, the development of peanuts and other legumes for forage, the opening of packing plants during World War I in Moultrie, Statesboro, Macon, Tifton and Waycross, and encouragement from state veterinarians, all contributed to the improvement of the state's swine population.

The number of hogs and pigs butchered in Georgia peaked during World War I. Afterwards, swine population began to drop but the pounds produced and marketed steadily increased. For example, the state's annual production increased more than 57 percent from 1924 to 1949, and the number of pounds marketed increased five-fold during this same period.

Although the state's hog population has dropped in recent years, the swine industry remains a vital part of Georgia's agricultural economy.