

Swine

In the early days of Georgia's colonization, hog production was both limited and haphazard. In fact, it was not until the twentieth century that swine production became a specialized industry.

The earliest Georgia swine probably descended from those imported to the coast by explorer Hernando DeSoto when he landed in Florida in 1539. These animals were imported from the West Indies and transported by DeSoto during his journey through what is now Georgia, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana.

When the first colonists arrived in Georgia, they also imported their own stock with them. These animals were grown under free range conditions and had to forage for most all of their feed.

In Colonial Georgia, hogs generally were not allowed within the boundaries of towns. Oglethorpe once ordered a number of hogs shot for "trespassing," because the animals had wandered into Fort Frederica from an outlying plantation and damaged the fortifications by rooting into the earthen foundations.

During this period, hogs often were raised on islands along the coast where they could enjoy open rangeland but would be prohibited from straying too far. Raising swine in pasture made it virtually impossible to improve the stock through breeding. Because of the damage hogs inflicted on growing crops, some planters began confining swine long before other livestock.

Although swine tended to be more



popular among the state's planters than other livestock, such as sheep and goats, they still were not produced in great numbers. Because of the high price of cotton, southerners continued devoting more acreage to it until, after 1840, there was little rangeland left in the Piedmont Cotton Belt. With less rangeland available, corn feeding became the common practice, making hog production more costly.

At this time, farmers had not learned to grow special crops, such as legumes, on which their stock could graze. When hogs were left to forage on open pasture, the stock tended to be half-wild. These hogs were commonly called "razorbacks" or "land pikers," among other names.

Although this method of raising hogs produced a poor quality animal, it provided farmers a fair return on a small investment. Because of the low cost and simplicity of this method, farmers had little interest in improving their stock.