

# William J. Loeffel, 1894–1962: A Brief Biography

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William J. Loeffel, the son of Wm. C. and Ida L. (Schoenthaler), was born August 31, 1894, in St. Louis, MO. He received his grade and high school education in the St. Louis public schools. Following farming experience in St. Louis and Jefferson Counties, Missouri and Chelan County, Washington, he enrolled in the College of Agriculture, University of Missouri in 1913. He received his B.S. degree from the University of Missouri in 1917. He moved to Lincoln, NE and on August 1, 1917, was appointed Scientific Assistant, U.S. Bureau of Animal Industry in charge of 4-H Pig Club work and to do adult animal husbandry extension work. Loeffel was appointed assistant professor of Animal Husbandry, University of Nebraska on April 1, 1919. He also continued his education and received the M.S. degree in Zoology

from the University of Nebraska in 1929. He was promoted to associate professor in 1925 and to professor in 1936. In 1938, Professor Loeffel was appointed acting chairman and, in 1940, chairman of the Animal Husbandry Department. He married Hazel Jane Baer on August 12, 1919. They had three sons, William C., Edwin J., and Frank A. Mrs. Loeffel died July 12, 1988, 26 years after the death of her husband.

Professor Loeffel served the American Society of Animal Production as president in 1936, vice president in 1935, secretary-treasurer in 1932–34, edited the Proceedings of the Society from 1932 through 1934, and was on the editorial board of the *Journal of Animal Science* from 1942 through 1944. On November 25, 1960, he was elected a Fellow in the Society.

In 1958, the University of Nebraska Block & Bridle Club selected Professor Loeffel as their Honoree, as a teacher and swine and meats authority. His portrait hangs in the Animal Sciences building Hall of Fame. That same year, he was one of three to receive the Signal Service Award from the Reciprocal Meat Conference. In 1962, after his death, the Proceedings of the Fifteenth Reciprocal Meat Conference were dedicated to "Prof," as he was known by his friends, students, and colleagues. In October 1958, he was recognized as "a tireless contributor to progress in the livestock industry" by the Nebraska Livestock Feeders Association in a ceremony at Grand Island, NE. Lawrence Brock, past president of the Association, said, "For more than 40 years, Loeffel has served in a humble way the interests of stockmen as well as students. . . he is a person possessed with unusual talents in meat and livestock research. . . he was also practical in his application of feeding and marketing methods, and most of all, a man who had a real down-to-earth knowledge of the problems confronting the livestock feeder." In the April 18, 1958 *Omaha Daily-Journal Stockman* was this quote, "Loeffel, a modest man who was a nationally recognized livestock and meat authority. . . ."

Professor Loeffel served on many livestock and meat committees and on the Agricultural Board of the National Research Council. He was chairman of the subcommittee on Laws, Rules and Regulations Governing Animal Health and was on the subcommittee on Nutrient Requirements for Swine of that council. He served on the Feed Survey Committee of the Feed Industry Council from 1943 to 1947. He was general superintendent of the Ak-Sar-Ben Livestock

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Show in Omaha, NE, from its inception in 1928 and was on the Board of Governors of the American Royal Live Stock Show in Kansas City, MO. His favorite assignments were with the Conference on Cooperative Meat Investigations, where he served on the Meat Review Committee from 1935 to 1946 and chaired that committee from 1942 to 1946. He also served as chairman of the Pork and Lard Projects Reports of that organization.

"Prof" loved history and humor. He could relate many events, such as the fire in the upper floor of Animal Husbandry Hall and the time that so much hay was put in the haymow of the dairy barn next door that it collapsed onto the cows below. He liked to reminisce about the time he was loaned to the Nebraska Emergency Relief Administration from July 1, 1934, to April 1, 1935, as supervisor of their Bureau of Meat Processing in charge of drought cattle slaughtering and processing for Nebraska. He elaborated on this in his last publication, April 1962, *Animal Husbandry Through the Years at the University of Nebraska*. He told of this drought experience as well as many other animal husbandry activities such as the beginning of the annual Feeders Days held by the department, the increase in size of the department's physical plant, including the extended period it took to get his promised meat laboratory, and about the off-campus departmental farms and livestock herds. This history also highlighted many of the research programs within the department during the years from 1919 to 1962. He wrote about the judging teams, especially about the development of meat judging contests from the beginning when he was one of the early leaders. In 1926 he coached the Nebraska meat judging team for the first contest at the International Livestock Show in Chicago. His team won the contest. During the next 10 years his teams also won the contests in 1928 and 1935. On November 30, 1954, at the 25th anniversary of Collegiate Meat Contests held at Wilson & Company in Chicago, Professor Loeffel was invited to review "The Contributions of R. C. Pollock to the Live Stock and Meat Industry," because the Live Stock and Meat Board had sponsored all of the meat contests. It was also a proud event in his life when he was asked to give the featured talk, "Thirty-two Years of Service to the Meat Industry," at the R. C. Pollock Testimonial Dinner at the 32nd Annual Meeting of the National Live Stock and Meat Board in Chicago, June 23, 1955. This presentation was an excellent history of the Meat Board and how it had promoted education, research, and information on the importance of meat in the diet.

One of Professor Loeffel's most popular publications was a bulletin entitled "The Large Quantity Barbecue," which was published by the National Live Stock and Meat Board and received national distribution. He also wrote Nebraska Extension Circulars #228, "Farm Slaughtering of Hogs," in 1925 and revised in 1933 and #247, "Hog Slaughtering and Pork

Cutting," in 1943. In these classics there was a detailed pen and ink drawing of how to properly stick a pig for bleeding. This drawing was also used in the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farmers Bulletin #1186, "Pork on the Farm, Killing, Curing, and Canning" in 1921 and by meat-curing salt companies in their bulletins for on-the-farm curing, such as the 1922 bulletin by Carey Salt Company entitled "Simple Instructions for Butchering on the Farm." He also wrote Nebraska Circular #248, "Beef on the Farm," in 1944. These circulars were used as texts in farm slaughtering courses and they received wide distribution to county extension agents and vocational agriculture instructors throughout the country.

Professor Loeffel's last course at the University of Nebraska was Meat Production and Distribution, which included livestock marketing. Through the cooperation of the Omaha Livestock Market in 1940, he established a Livestock Marketing School for College of Agriculture upper classmen. Later, schools were conducted for Nebraska and Iowa county agricultural extension agents. In this way many of his students were able to learn first-hand what the central marketing system was all about. It was difficult for "Prof" to see the large central markets being replaced by the local livestock sales barns.

On September 1, 1959, he asked to be relieved from duties as chairman of the department. He moved his office to the meat laboratory which had been promised to him in 1919 but not constructed until 1953. Loeffel Meat Laboratory was named in his honor in 1967.

Professor Loeffel's last assignment in the Animal Husbandry Department was to prepare a paper for the 50th Annual Feeders Day on April 18, 1962. In that paper he recounted history of the University of Nebraska, the College of Agriculture, and how Feeders Day was started in 1912 by Professor H. R. Smith. Over the years many different facilities on campus were used to accommodate the crowds at feeders day that reached a peak of 4,500. In the early days, excursion rates were offered by some railroads and people would come by special trains that were left on switch tracks near the horse barn on the campus. Then people started coming by automobile except for one year during World War II when the program was also broadcast by radio to those who could not get gasoline or tires for the trip to Lincoln. The last sentence of his paper stated "One of the greatest values of Feeders Days has been the friendship and fellowship which it has developed among people engaged in a common business." Tragically, Professor Loeffel became seriously ill and was unable to give this talk and he died on May 5, 1962. He probably would have closed with this favorite of his:

Here's to a good horse under you.  
 Ahead a long and smooth ride  
 With good water and grass  
 To the top of the pass  
 Where trails cross the great divide.