

SHEEP BENEFICIAL TO LAND.

John M. Stahl, in Indiana Farmer.

Our rich prairie soils produce weeds as well as corn, and the work of the cultivator is not so much to aid the growth of crops as to stop the growth of weeds. Three weeds—jimson, cocklebur and velvet leaf—are tenacious of life and vigorous of growth above all others, and to eradicate them after they have once secured a good foothold is almost impossible. So long as the land is kept in cultivated crops they are apt to hold their own, for in spite of the greatest care some will escape destruction late in the season and mature seed to produce a crop the next year. If the land is in grass and apparently the sod has smothered out the weeds, they are only sleeping and will awaken into vigorous growth as soon as cultivation begins. Sheep are the only farm animals that will eat these weeds. They will trim the foliage off the cocklebur and velvet leaf, and tramp about and nibble the jimson until even they are killed out. The easiest way, and really the only practical way, to get rid of these weeds is to call in the sheep to help you. They may not be able to do all the work themselves, but they can and will do the major part of it. No weed will escape them. You, with the scythe or hoe, will miss some; but the sheep will not. If the land is in corn you must keep the ground clear of these weeds so long as cultivation lasts. Then, when the stalks have made their growth you can turn the sheep into the field and leave the rest to them. The sheep will not do the corn any real injury; and they will not allow a weed to go to seed.

I have spoken of the jimson, cocklebur and velvet leaf, because they are weeds which other farm animals will not touch, hence are of no aid in destroying these pests. There are other weeds—ragweed, for example—more numerous than any of the three I have mentioned; but those other weeds cattle, horses and hogs will eat, and some of them so greedily as to destroy them. Yet sheep eat them better than will cattle or horses. Sheep are close croppers and destroy the weeds when they are so small that cattle or horses would not get them; or if the weeds are large the sheep keep their foliage so well cropped off that they soon die.

This disposition of sheep to consume weedy, unpalatable growths, makes them, of all farm animals, the natural scavengers of land. The man who has a foul, weedy farm needs grit, muscle and sheep. This is true everywhere, as it is in Illinois, Sheep will make a good living off weeds, briars and shrubs which other farm animals would scarcely touch; and while converting these noxious growths into wool and mutton, they also cleanse the land and prepare it for better growths.

It is readily seen that of all farm animals, sheep are the best for bringing up worn-out land. Such land cannot support a succulent, nutritious growth. It can produce only herbs, weeds, briars, and perhaps a few dry grasses. Upon these cattle or hogs would not make sufficient growth to make their keeping profitable; but sheep would make a profitable growth at the same time that they cleansed the land and also enriched it by their manure, thus fitting it for better growths. I have seen more than one farm, so unproductive that it was unprofitable, and given over to weeds and briars, made above the average in fertility and hence highly profitable, by keeping on it for fifteen years all the sheep it could pasture; and all the time the sheep brought in a fair income for the money invested and labor expended.

The manure of sheep is not materially different in value from the manure of cattle, if both have the same food. But when the sheep live upon weeds, shrubs and dry, unpalatable grasses, upon which cattle would barely subsist, the manure of the sheep has a greater comparative value and will do more toward increasing the productiveness of the land. The desideratum is to get good grasses in place of

the poor ones and the weeds and shrubs: and sheep do better work to accomplish this than do other farm animals, not only because they clear the land for good grasses, but because they add more manure to nourish these grasses, and also distribute it more evenly over the ground. Horses and cattle deposit their manure in heaps, and unless it is harrowed or brushed over the ground it is of very little benefit to the grass; and hogs deposit their manure altogether in some places, leaving others bare. But sheep put theirs evenly over the ground and all is benefited.

Not always, but usually, poor land is owned by poor men, who could not go to any great expense to bring it up, and to them sheep will strongly recommend themselves because of their small cost. The price of a horse or of two cows will buy a respectable flock of common sheep, and by using only full-blooded males the flock can soon be graded up to a practical value substantially equal to that of full bloods. And this flock, got at so small a cost, will cleanse and fertilize the land, and at the same time produce a speedy and considerable income. Sheep are valuable upon rich land to cleanse it; they are yet more valuable upon poor land, and their cost puts them within the reach of the usual owners of poor land.

For cleansing land the Merinos are superior to the English breeds. In their earliest eastern home, the property of a semi-barbarous and migratory people, in a land where the herbage was scanty and of poor quality, they had, for centuries, to get their own living; and when they were taken to Spain they yet had to shift for themselves, and under circumstances scarcely more favorable. Thus for centuries the conditions of their life developed and fixed the foraging propensity, and an indifference to the quality of their food; and these characteristics are as strongly marked to-day as they ever were. The English breeds have been more fortunate in the treatment they have received, hence are not so enterprising as foragers, nor are they so indifferent to the quality of their food. Hence for cleansing land the Merinos should be selected, especially if considerable exposure must be endured; and if they are thought too small, then cross them with one of the large English breeds. Size will be gained and there will be but little loss in the foraging propensity.

FOWL CHOLERA.

In all malarious countries on this continent, says the *Fanciers' Gazette*, fowls are subject to what is known as "chicken cholera," a disease which spares but few in a flock where it appears, and, being contagious, old and young are almost certain to take it. It is claimed that the annual loss in the United States by this disease amounts to \$15,000,000.

It is undoubtedly true that no specific has, as yet, been discovered for this disease, but we firmly believe that not one-tenth of the annual loss would occur if proper precautions were taken instead of the careless and slipshod methods that are now followed by those who keep fowls. When a man believes there is no profit in giving fowls any special attention and that fowls and their care are beneath his dignity, who would prefer the drudgery and hard labor of the farm or shop to that of giving some extra attention to them, it is no wonder that this disease works in and disheartens (?) him. On the other hand, the best fanciers, those who do really take pride in fine fowls and give them suitable quarters, feed and care, as a rule do not suffer any loss by this disease. But let them get careless and send their stock out on farms, or place it in the charge of careless and indolent help, who have no interest than simply to draw their stated stipend, and sure enough, in will stalk cholera with all of its accompanying horrors.

Let this disease once become fairly epidemic in a flock of fowls, and it is difficult to manage, and results in laying waste all ages and sexes. But we assert and believe from our observation and actual experience with the disease, that it can be avoided and prevented; but to do so the rules must be enforced year in and year out, and the door is open for the admission of the disease as soon as the same are not complied with for any length of time. This is the preventive: Provide good houses and ample ventilation, night and day, summer and winter. Provide good shelter in stormy weather and shade in hot weather. Always provide pure water in such places that they will not be forced to go out into the storm or hot sun to get it when thirsty. Avoid overstocking, or crowding, or huddling. Keep houses, coops and runs clean and disinfected. Fill up all cesspools and holes filled with stagnant and filthy water which may be within the reach of the fowls. Avoid over-feeding at one time, and then suffering them to run for a long time without feed. Avoid sudden changes from dry to green food, and do not at any time suffer fowls to be over-fed or glutted with green or decaying fruit and vegetables, as these should always be fed sparingly. Avoid feeding too much corn during hot weather to adult fowls. Give them at least twice a week, from early spring till late fall, soft feed, in which stir in sulphur to the proportion of two tablespoonfuls in every ten quarts of feed. Add a little Douglas mixture to the drinking water. Always remove and isolate every fowl showing any symptoms of ailment.

All of the above requirements can be fully carried out if the poultryman starts in properly, and if he is on the wrong track it will be far better to make a complete change now rather than after it has cost him dearly in the way of ravages of such a disease.

SENSE.

National Stockman.

Where it is convenient to allow your boy to own a colt or two in his own right, and where the young fellow is sufficiently manly to appreciate the animal for what he is, and shows sufficient pride to want to make him all he can become, it is both sensible and profitable to "give the boy a chance." Personal ownership of fine stock, with an understanding of its value, will do more to develop in the youth (1) a liking for the farm and (2) a broad and progressive spirit in connection with farming than perhaps anything else. Even a liberal education will do less toward making an enthusiastic farmer, filled with the better side of his chosen business, unless it is accompanied by association with the higher types of domestic animals. Nothing is better calculated to develop enthusiasm in the boy for good stock than the ownership of a fine horse. Its beauty, its spirit, its intelligence, its susceptibility to training, its capacity for affection for its master—all appeal most strongly to those with whom such animals come in contact. Let your boy own a colt. Let it be a blooded one if you can afford it—at least let it have a good sire. Encourage the boy to keep it in good condition and handsome in appearance, thus getting him accustomed to habits of care which will stand him in good stead when he comes to handle other kinds of stock. Encourage him to develop his steed in every way except one—and that is in speed competitions. Whatever you do, keep him out of the fair ground trot or pace, and teach him that he is not to learn how much value a good horse can be to a *jockey*, but of how much use it can be to a *man*. Nine out of ten farmers' boys who get into the speed-ring are worsted by its associations and tendencies, and we cannot close this paragraph better than by urging every father to keep his boy out of it.