

Winter Care of Sheep

BY J. C. MCBEATH, '18.

Owing to the present high price of wool, mutton and lamb, there is no doubt that there are many farmers considering the advisability of branching out into the sheep and wool business. A few points about sheep right here might be of good service in enabling them to arrive at a suitable conclusion.

SHEEP-RAISING is a very attractive part of farming when it is considered financially, and everyone is very much interested in the money part of any enterprise. The financial gain may be direct or indirect. Still it is sure to come to those who persevere. Of all the animals kept on the farm, sheep entail the least work. Ask any man that keeps sheep as well as other stock on his farm and he will say that the work connected with sheep is practically nothing when compared to the labor of taking care of other stock. Sheep may be said to be dual purpose in that they raise lambs and grow wool in one year. They are very easy feeders and next to hogs they make the most economical gains of any animal, and at the present high prices of feed, this is a point that is well worth serious consideration. The housing required for sheep is very cheap when compared to the shelter required for other classes of stock. This is a good argument in their favor. Co-related to the cheapness of housing is the small outlay for foundation stock which is a primary consideration with all beginners, no matter what phase of the live stock trade they are about to enter upon. A flock of sheep will act as a "clean up squad" on a farm. There is no better animal, unless it be the goat that will do more in cleaning a place of weeds and keeping it clean. They are very close croppers and are able to pick a good living off a field where either horses or cattle would starve. But there is one big drawback to the sheep industry that is very liable

to discourage the beginner. It is the sheep-killing dog which is such a worry to the sheep-owner. There is a way of baffling this marauder and that is by furnishing a dog-proof paddock in which the sheep may stay at night during the time they are on pasture.

The winter time is when the sheep require the most attention so a few general hints on the management of the flock may not be out of place. One of the most primary and important factors is the shelter for the sheep. It need not be expensive, but yet it must be right. A sheep-pen must not be warm, and consequently a shed free from drafts and well-drained is an ideal place. The openings should be to the south if possible, to allow free access of the warm sunshine. The doors should be wide in order that the pregnant ewes will not get jammed which might result in the losing of one or more lambs and possibly a ewe. In nice weather the sheep should be given the freedom of the yard and allowed to go in and out of the pen as they please. In stormy weather they won't go very far from home, but it is a good plan to keep a watch over them in case any should get strayed away.

The convenience of the pen, and likewise the arrangement and form of feeding racks is a matter of judgment on the part of the individual. There ought to be plenty of good clean bedding supplied to the sheep, because a lack of bedding is sure to result in dirty wool which will grade lower and consequently a lower price results.