



MIXED FARMING

MANITOBA - SASKATCHEWAN - ALBERTA

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Sheep Raising

Sheep might well occupy a more prominent place on Western farms than they do at present. They are easily kept, require little care except at lambing time and are excellent weed destroyers. With comparatively little outlay they bring in a very acceptable increase in revenue. However, on the arable farm they should always be kept in the place of a minor side line. Used as weed destroyers and utilizers of waste, they are very profitable, but if a man undertook to make the raising of sheep the main feature of his

farm the profit probably disappear. The only exceptions to this are that very unproductive land that would not pay to farm, might be profitably used in large areas as sheep ranches, and a few breeders who develop great reputations for pure-bred stock for which they can command high prices, can afford to devote their main energies to sheep raising. The ordinary man can do better to make grain, cattle or some other line his main money-maker and use the sheep as a minor, yet nevertheless valuable and even important factor in the management of the mixed farm. Probably a hundred breeding ewes should be the limit on the ordinary-sized farm, and less than that would be plenty on a quarter-section farm.

The principal obstacles in the way of the introduction of sheep on to more farms are the question of fencing and the danger of loss from coyotes and dogs. The first should not really be an obstacle though it may seem so. Anyone going in for mixed farming really needs to have the farm fenced. The fenceless prairie can be farmed only by a purely grain-growing system. Perhaps sheep need a tighter fence than would be necessary for cattle and horses,

but in any case the farm should be fenced with woven wire, as barbed wire is dangerous and unsatisfactory. Woven wire fencing is really part of a mixed farming system and should not be charged up against the sheep alone.

The dog and wolf problem is a real problem, and is far from being solved. Nearly every farm has at least one dog and every country village is overrun with them. Ninety-nine out of every hundred are absolutely useless and they form a real menace to the sheep raising industry. Unfortunately, dog lovers are more numerous and more influential than sheep raisers, and as a result the dog is the favored one in the

wolves by tight fencing around the pasture is, to a great degree, a futile effort. None of the ordinary woven fences are of fine enough mesh to be dog and wolf proof. A fence that would really keep them out would be too expensive to be practical and would have to extend below the ground as well as above. Sheep worrying by dogs and the depredations of coyotes are almost always carried on at night. If they should be attempted by day they would usually be seen or heard on the average farm before great damage were done. At night they have a chance to do all the killing they like without being disturbed. Thus the danger of loss can be greatly reduced by providing night shel-

ter. The Merinos and Merino grades used on the ranges are small and undesirable for farm use. The Down breeds, especially Shropshire, Oxford and Suffolk, are well suited to Western farm conditions. They are good sized, thrifty and vigorous, produce a good carcass of mutton and are well protected by their thick heavy fleeces. The South Down is of similar character and even finer mutton quality, but being small is not so suitable in grading up inferior stock. The Long Wool breeds such as Leicester and Cotswold are large sheep of good mutton quality, but their open fleeces are hardly as good protection against snow and storm, neverthe-

less, their crosses make good sheep if reasonable shelter is given.

It is not at all necessary for the beginner to get pure bred or even high grade ewes to start with. It is wonderful how quickly the mongrel range stock can be graded up through the use of pure bred rams. The range ewes though small and mean-looking are thrifty and are good mothers. Bred to pure bred rams of a large thrifty breed, they produce lambs of creditable size and quality. In a few years the original range stock may be discarded and a uni-



Down in the Brush Lot

Courtesy of Canadian Kodak Co.

making and administering of the laws. An effort should be made by stock breeders to obtain laws giving greater freedom for the sheep owner to shoot at sight the itinerant dog. As things are at present the dog pest is a great danger especially to the flock situated near a town or village. The coyote is quite a cause of loss in some districts, especially in districts where there is a good deal of scrub land. Unlike the dog he is fair game for the hunter and is being gradually driven out and should eventually be exterminated. In the meantime, methods of protection should be studied and adopted where practicable. To try to keep out dogs and

ter. If convenient, the sheep may come to the barn and be shut in, or a dog-proof corral can be made in the pasture and they can be shut in there. They are easily trained to come to such a place. If they are fed some grain there in the evening for a while in the spring and occasionally throughout the summer and are given salt there, they will form the habit of coming to the shelter to sleep at night and can be enclosed without any trouble. A dry, clean sleeping place should always be kept for them. Sheep dislike very much to lie in dirty damp places, and if compelled to do so will have colds.

Breeds

For the mixed farm districts,

form lot of breedily-looking young ewes will be ready to take their place. In this breeding-up process it is of the greatest importance that the same breed of ram be used continuously. Choose a good breed and stick to it consistently! Two crosses with rams of good character will produce sheep that can scarcely be told from pure breeds.

Feeding

In the summer time the sheep can gather most of their own feed. The land that is being summer-fallowed makes a good run for sheep. In the early part of the season before this land is ploughed, they will range over it

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