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AGRICULTURE

Sheep Raising Affords Great Chances For Profit

A short time ago the farmers' clubs of Lennoxville, Cookshire and Hatley Centre were addressed by Professor Barton and Mr. A. MacMillan of Macdonald College. Both addresses were confined to sheep raising, Professor Barton dealing with the general situation of sheep in the Province and Mr MacMillan with the subject from the standpoint of feeding, fattening and marketing of lambs.

In opening his address Professor Barton stated emphatically that in his opinion sheep offered better possibilities than any other class of live stock in the Province. It is a fact, however, that the sheep business is steadily on the decline. It is true of this Province and of this country. For this condition of affairs there are various reasons mentioned. In the first place sheep have not been a paying proposition. This statement cannot be substantiated today. It is true a few years ago wool was low and mutton still lower but that is not true today. Wool has advanced six cents this year alone and there is not enough mutton or lamb to supply the demand. Already lambs are seven and half cents on the Montreal market.

"Another obstacle held out every where" said Prof. Barton, "is the risk and loss through the killing of sheep by dogs. This obstacle does exist but it is in our power to control. If sheep will pay, and I can prove they are profitable, are we going to allow ourselves to be set back by the useless cur? I will deal with this more fully later."

Pasture is another reason held out against shep but it is really one in their favor for our conditions as will be shown later. Then there is the question of fencing. It is true sheep require a special kind of fence, yet they are so profitable that they will easily pay for any extra out-lay in fencing in a short time, to say nothing of what a good fence means for other phases of farm practice.

Factor in Mized Farming.

"To my mind" Prof. Barton continued, "one of the greatest reasons for the decline of the sheep industry is the one I am about to mention and that is the fact that, on the average farm, sheep are looked upon as a side issue. They have been gradually neglected and in many cases eventually forgotten. There may have been several factors influencing this. It is true that sheep require little capital, a small amount of labor and little thought to bring returns, yet this is a day of specializing. There is a growing tendency to specialize. Farmers claim that this is an age of specialization. With some it is strictly dairying, with others something else, yet few are qualified to make a success as specialists. I am convinced that for the average farm mixed farming in its broadest sense is the safest and best practice. I wish to point out in this connection that in the United States, where surveys have been made and where specialists and mixed farmers occupy the same place as here, it has been clearly proved that mixed or deversified farming is the most profitable—in other words ,men who have more than one string to their bow or, as one man puts it, a litle of everything get the best returns for their labor. Unquestionably sheep will fit into such a practice and rival any other source in the returns they make.

We hear a great deal at the present time about rural conditions, the whole equilibrium of rural life being upset by emigration to the city. There are many phases of this matter, but it seems to me that the root of the matter lies in the fact that our land is not making hte return it should in dollars and cents. We have to admit that even the best of our land could do better, but in the Province of Quebec we hardly realize the tremendous area of land in each country that is absolutely barren and which might be making good returns. I refer to land which might be classed as unimproved, upon which is considerable herbage and from which revenue is possible only land growing nothing but heather would be producing more sheep than some of our good pasture land in the Province of Quebec.

To bring home to you the extent of such unimproved land I have prepared a few figures. In the counties of Compton, Sherbrooke and Stanstead,

	Acres
Compton—land improved	184,379
" unimproved	310,175

Think of this proportion. In Sherbrooke the proportion is not so high but worse than we might expect. In Sherbrooke there are 44,296 acres of improved land and 37,703 acres of unimproved land. Stanstead has 110,575 acres improved and 133,372 acres of unimproved land. In Compton there are 21,133 sheep or one sheep on fifteen acres. In Sherbrooke 2,316 or one sheep on eighteen acres. In Stanstead 5,789 sheep or one sheep on twenty-two acres. It is asking one sheep to do a great deal to graze fifteen, eighteen and twenty-two acres respectively and this fairly average for the province as a whole. Yet in the face of this, buyers are fighting for lambs and our consumption of mutton is increasing each year.

Sheep Profitable.

Sheep require a small amount of capital to start a flock; in fact a school boy can save enough money to lay the foundation for a breeding flock. The initial outlay is small, the returns are quick, and in the cost of housing no class of stock compares with sheep. All these factors are important inducements to farmers to high sheep because money rates are high and with many cases of stock means a large outlay. To prove my statement that sheep make returns let me give you a practical example. A neighbor of ours at Ste. Anne, bought 40 ewes for $255.00 a year ago. This fall he sold 50 lambs for $8.50 bringing $442.00 or 173 per cent on his investment. In the case of a number of flocks established in Ontario in widely different sections under ordinary farm conditions the results were as follows:—9 flocks of 10 ewes, and one ram produced an average of 12 lambs for each flock per year. The initial cost of 10 ewes and one ram at $25.00 was $104.00. The total returns of each flock for each year, including wool, was $125.43. Charges against each flock, including ram and lambs, for feed were $80.40. Total profit was $45.08 or 43 percent profit.

Sheep involve little labor. They are easily handled; in fact sheep raising should solve to a certain extent the labor problem.

Feeding and Fattening.

Mr. MacMillan followed Professor Barton's address by dealing with the feeding, fattening and marketing of lambs. We know very little bout lamb feeding, in fact we have given the matter little thought or study. We market practically all our lambs during the months of September and October at a time when prices are lowest. In practically all cases our lambs are not fitted, and an unfinished product is marketed, which in itself is bad practice.

If we look at the market prices for the year we find that during the months of July and August lambs are high, being worth at lowest eight cents per pound. During September and October prices run around six cents per pound. By the middle of December prices rise to the vicinity of eight cents or over and continue high till spring. These prices show us that July and August and from he middle of December on during the winter are the most profitable times for marketing lambs.

A lamb that is sold during the months of July or August must be born by March 1st. It is true marmer quarters are necessary, the ewe will require more grain during the early part of the winter as well as after lambing, and she will require more attention, but at this time of the year farm work is slack and the farmer is in a position to give the required attention. A little grain all winter will bring the ewe to lambing time in good condition. After lambing considerable roots stimulate the flow of milk and a grain ration of one part of bran to two parts of oats and a little oil cake is excellent. This milk clover hay should provide ample food for the ewe. In a couple of weeks the lamb will begin to nibble grain and should be encouraged to take all it will.

By the time the ewe goes on grass the lamb should weigh in the vicinity of forty pounds. It will grow rapidly during the summer and by July should weigh about eighty pounds. Such lambs this year were sold for eight and ten dollars each and the supply was not equal to the demand. A sheep that will raise two such lambs is about as good a paying proposition as a farmer can keep.

The practice of selling lambs early in the fall, while perhaps to a certain extent profitable, is not good business practice. Lambs should be fed and placed on the market finished. Successful lamb feeding depends on two crops, namely, rape and turnip. Lambs should be weaned about the first of September, and at this time a field of rape with a good pasture adjoining will give good gains. Rape may be sown after barley or oats, or with corn, sowing three to four pounds per acre. Rape affords a large amount of green feed; it is estimated that an acre of rape will pasture twenty-five to thirty lambs for two months. Lambs will gain from ten to twelve pounds in this period so that one acre of rape will produce practically one hundred and twenty pounds of mutton. The present price of lambs is seven to seven-fifty. At seven cents per pound, one hundred and twenty pounds, the return from one acre, is worth eight dollars and forty cents. This compares favorably with the average returns per acre throughout the Province. At present our fields during the fall grow up to weeds. Surely it is a better policy to grow rape, check the weeds and get returns, at the same time adding fertility to the soil. In the United States, where this practice is followed, farmers claim that where once they produced forty bushels of corn they now get sixty. Probably the two most effective means of keeping down the fertilizer bill are seeding to clover and feeding lambs and sheep. By the middle of November, when heavy frosts come, lambs should be removed from the rape because frozen rape is dangerous. Lambs may be sold but they are still profitable to feed. A lamb weighing between eighty and ninety pounds in September before going to rape will weigh somewhere in the vicinity of one hundred pounds by the middle of November. Such lambs if put in to feed should weigh one hundred and thirty pounds by the middle of March and bring at least eight cents per pound. Let us take one hundred lambs weighing eight pounds in the middle of September and see what they are worth when they come off the rape and in the spring at present prices:

Sept. 15th.
100 lambs, weight 88, 8800 at 6c. ..... $ 525.00
Nov 15th.
100 lambs, weight 100, 10000 at 7c. 700.00
March 15th.
100 lambs, weight 130, 13000 at 8c. 1,040.00

These lambs nearly double in value, and what will it cost us to feed them? The rape should be thrown in because there is little expense and the value of the dropping offset this; however, we can allow value for the rape and still have good profits as the following will show.

A lamb will eat during the winter for 100 days:—

8 to 10 lbs. turnips, per day at 6c. per bushel.	.80
1 1-2 lbs. hay per day at $10.00 per ton	.75
100 lbs. meal per day at 1 1-2 per lb.	1.25
Total	$2.80

There is still a profit of 22.32 per lamb, allowing full market value for all feed. It costs from one to three dollars to produce one hundred pounds of mutton, which is lower than for any other kind of stock. Why not feed a portion of the grain that now goes to our cattle, pigs or horses to our sheep and get more economical returns. To give you a practical result the following experiment will prove the correctness of my statement. Twenty-six lambs bought for $6.10 per ct. weighed on October 13th, 2501 lbs. Value at $6.10, $152.60. On Nov. 10th. they weighed 2758 lbs. Value at $7.00 (present price) $193.06. A profit in less than one month of $41.46 on an investment of $152.60.

A Suggestion.

In closing I wish to throw out a suggestion . There is no system in the marketing of our lambs. We farmers do not get the price we should, and it is due to a large extent to lack of co-operation. If our farmers' clubs would take the matter in hand and handle their lambs and wool through their clubs they would get much better prices and would be placing the lamb situation on a better business basis. Wool should also be handled in the same way. We shall be pleased at any time in the spring to give a shearing demonstration together with a talk on trying and grading of fleece. Breeding stock might also be bought for farmers. There is no limitaion to the scope which this work might assume; in fact it might be advisable in some cases to form a separate sheep and lamb club on a purely co-operative basis.

How To Remedy Evil Of Improverished Soil

Many farmers act as if their soils were inexhaustible, and they are astonished when they fail to get crops equal to those their fathers got fifty or seventy-five years ago. Perhaps no fact is so hard to get into the head of the average farmer as the one that farms will wear out if the substances taken out of the soil by the crops are not returned.

When the farms were first cleared nature had filled the soil with richness, the accumulation of centuries of vegetation that had grown only to die down again. The land grew rich crops for many years, but all the while a robbery of the soil was going on. The rich black loam gradually became lighter in color as the humus was used up. With cultivation the destruction of the organic matter was hastened, for as more air circulated through the soil bacterial action became more rapid. As a result the soil's capacity for holding water was greatly reduced and droughts became more common and more ruinous than they were years ago when humus was abundant. Moreover, the mellow texture of the soil gradually disappeared, so that cultivatee plants found it increasingly difficult to grow.

As the loss of nitrogen is closely associated with the loss of humus, on account of the inactivity leaching that takes place, poorly farmed lands became deficient in this very essential element.

Many of our farms have also suffered much from loss of phosphorus through continuous cropping of oats, wheat and hay. Prof. Shutt, Chemist of the Dominion Experimental Farms, reports losses of 50 per cent. of the soluble phosphorus of typical cultivated soils in New Brunswick. Erosion and leaching are responsible for considerable loss not only of phosphorus and potash but also of carbonate of lime. This substance is important both as a food for plants and as a soil-improver. It corrects acidity in the soil, makes conditions more favorable for the growth of bacteria which liberate plant food, and improves the texture of the soil. There is considerable evidence that farms in many districts in Quebec are suffering on account of lack of carbonate of lime. The difficulty of getting good stands of alfalfa and clover is largely due to this depletion.

It is a fact that soils wear out, and the reason for the impoverishment are not hard to find. This matter of soil exhaustion calls imperatively for economic conservation and restoration. It is one of the great problems in agriculture, and the phase of the restoration of fertility is more difficult of solution today than ever before on account of the scarcity and increased cost of labor.

"Up" The Rhine

Mrs. Robinson: And were you up the Rhine?

Mrs. De oJnes: I should think so; right to the very top. What a splendid view there is from the summit

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