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Farmers' Market Place

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Care of the Breeding Flock

Continued from Page 11

as long as she will continue to do so, irrespective of age. There is too great a tendency today on farms to get rid of stock after it has been bred one or two years, before it has really reached maturity and before real results can be expected.

Indications of Age

It is comparatively simple to tell the age of a sheep by its teeth. The temporary lamb teeth are characteristically long and narrow, constricted at the neck and quite white. At one year old the centre pair of permanent incisors appears and a new pair of permanent teeth.

five years a full mouth is reached. From then on the teeth get wider apart and fall out. In order to become proficient in telling the age in sheep it is best to examine the mouths of sheep of known age and from these, with practice, the correct age of any sheep can be judged. As soon as the selection of the flock is completed and the separation of the breeding ewes from the lambs and butcher's sheep finally arranged attention should be paid to getting the breeding ewes, into shape for the breeding season. The period during which a ewe carries a lamb averages 147 days or a little less than five months, hence, since in the west it is not desirable for the beginner to have the lambs coming. much before the first of May unless good warm stabling is provided for the sheep, the ram's services are not required until the end of November. It is desirable that the ewes be in as uniformly a thrifty condition as possible, so that they may come in heat at about the same time, thus ensuring a crop of lambs in the following spring of about the same age. In the west scarcely any feeding other than that which can be picked up by the sheep themselves on the stubble is necessary previous to breeding time, since a large amount of grain and food which otherwise would be largely wasted can be turned to good account by the farm flock being pastured on the stubble after threshing is over in the fall. During this time consideration should be given to the kind Under no circumof ram required. stances should any other than a purebred sire be used, and due attention should be paid to breed characteristics, general conformation and symmetry, together with the constitution and quality which will make as desirable a sire as it is possible to obtain. Where young ewes are being bred it is somewhat more desirable that an aged ram of known capabilities be used, because in such a case if some of the lambs produced are undesirable there would be no mistake made in putting the blame on the ewes and culling them out for sale in the fall. The ram should be in good healthy condition in readiness for the breeding season, and, if the flock is a small one, when breeding time comes he may be allowed to pasture with the To the Leginners' mind there no doubt arises an enquiry as to the most suitable breed of sheep for Western conditions. Of course there is no best breed, but out of the many it is recommended that some good grade Western ewes be obtained from crosses of any of the Down breeds and that a pure-bred ram of either the Oxford, Southdown, Suffolk, Hampshire or Shropshire breed be used as the head of the flock. If the long wooled breeds are preferred, either a Cotswold, Leicester or Lincoln may be obtained, and since these are usually larger sheep, having great width of back and loin, they are particularly valuable in grading up the ordinary native range ewes.

Methods of Breeding

The breeding season for sheep only covers a period of from four to six weeks, so that altho the reproductive powers of the ram are very great it is scarcely advisable, if best results are to be obtained, to turn the ram loose with the ewes. One way which is largely followed is to pen the ram up with the ewes at night and keep him in a separate yard away from the flock in the day time. During this time he is kept in the quiet and fed good hay and some grain ration, such as oats and bran. Another method followed is one which necessitates more care, but on the other hand practically ensures the crop of lambs in the following spring. It is virtually hand breeding. method followed is to allow the ram to go in with the ewes in a pen early in the morning. The ram will soon pick out any which are in season and these can be kept in the pen while the remainder of the flock is allowed out over the stubble fields. These ewes are then bred separately to the ram, one every two hours or so. As soon as they are bred they should be taken away from the breeding pen altogether and kept for a couple of days with the fattening sheep and lambs apart from the breeding flock. Usually sheep bred in this way will not come in heat again. Rams