

### Washing and Shearing Sheep.

BY J. M'CAIG, PETERBORO.

**Washing.**—Washing and shearing time is approaching, and shepherds are looking forward to their customary routine for the season. In most cases this consists of a drive of the combined flocks for half a mile or a mile, along a dusty road, by two or three neighbors, with all hands on deck, each carrying an extra pair of trousers and pair of old boots.

The benefits of sheep-washing are generally understood to be that it prevents the useless transportation of large quantities of dirt with the wool, and that it raises the value of the wool in the mar-



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ket. It is thought, too, that by washing all wools are on the same footing, while the indiscriminate deduction of one-third of weight or price in the case of unwashed wools is unjust, as all are not alike dirty or yolk. In the case of the last argument it should be remembered that all washed wools are not alike clean, much passing for washed wool that has not been half washed. The transportation of considerable quantities of dirt must be paid for by someone, and it is as likely to be paid for by the farmer as by anyone else. With regard to the question of the market value of washed as against unwashed wool, it may be safely conjectured that the loss in price is nearly compensated by the gain in weight. In any case the price of wool in Canada is so low to what it formerly was that the difference is inconsiderable.

The advantages of not washing, on the other hand, are considerable, and relate principally to the meat side of sheep husbandry—the more important side in Canada, as our sheep are practically all of the mutton breeds. Sheep-washing cannot safely be done in our running creeks until near the end of June. This means a great discomfort to the sheep. It has been demonstrated by careful experiment that sheep feed better after the removal of the fleece in early spring than they do with it on. This applies particularly to the case of yearling wethers or ewes to be sold early in the spring, but applies to some extent to all sheep indiscriminately. At whatever time shearing takes place, it of course means a more or less violent change, as it means the exchange of the whole fleece for practically no wool at all. Our excessive climate, however, seems to accord well with this. The season of spring is a change from cold to sudden warmth, and it would seem more natural to take the fleece off the sheep as soon as the temperature admits of vegetable growth rather than leave the animal to carry it during six weeks more of increasingly hot weather.

It is certainly true that sheep are more impatient of heat than of cold. They have a peculiarly unsensitive skin. The yolk secretion lying next the skin about the roots of the wool, together with the wool itself, prevents the escape of animal heat from the body. For this reason sheep show total indifference to cold or frost. This quality of impervious skin, however, causes the sheep to suffer from heat. A sheep can sweat very little unless yolk be considered as a kind of sweat, and as a consequence its lung action becomes highly excited in hot weather. As far as warmth is concerned, then, sheep do not require much artificial protection at any time, but in warm weather they do require relief from heat. It is within the observation of all that none of the domestic animals avoid the heat as sheep do. Almost all spring and summer they seldom graze after half-past seven in the morning or before four or five o'clock in the evening, and they seek such places to lie in as the sun never reaches, under old barns being favorite places. Everything seems to favor earlier clipping. Wool is a wholly

subordinate side of sheep husbandry. Wool is only wool in this country, without consideration of grade or quality. The difference in returns between unwashed and washed wools is scarcely a consideration beside the question of the well-doing of both wethers and ewes with regard to flesh. Easter is nearer the natural time than June 1st is, and earlier is perhaps better for sheep that are to be sold at the opening of the grass season, always provided that the sheep have plenty of dry, warm litter, such as wheat straw, and are protected from drafts. Shearing of suckling ewes may check the flow of milk for a day or two, but the subsequent thriving of the ewe is of more than counterbalancing advantage. A ewe should not be shorn until five or six days after lambing, and then she should be hearty, not weak or sick. If they are handled carefully they may be shorn before lambing. If ticks abound, early shearing is an act of mercy, provided the lambs are dipped a few days after, which they certainly should be.

**Shearing.**—Shearing is an operation that cannot very well be learned from print. The experienced shepherd needs no hints; the novice can best learn to do by doing. A few hints for the beginner will not be out of place, because it is as important in this as in any other matter to begin right. Carelessness in details is of considerable importance. If shearing is to be done while sheep are on the grass, too many should not be put in a small pen at once, as they will soon dirty it and themselves; half a day's shearing is enough to provide for at a time. They are better to be not too full of grass for cleanliness sake, neither too hollow, as they shear better moderately full than empty. It is not necessary, whether sheared in March or May, that both sheep and shepherd should have the discomfort of a plank floor to rest on. If the light is good, one of the pens is a good place, as it generally contains a cushion of six or eight inches of waste fodder, which is likewise dry. Over this a piece of canvas or old carpet about twelve feet square should be spread, and fastened at the sides and corners. Sheep are more easily handled on the ground than on a bench, and the bench is not much of a saving on the back. It is much more encouraging for two to shear together than for one to work alone. Two pairs of shears are necessary: an inferior pair, not too large, for trimming off waste and dirt, and a larger pair for shearing. The shears should be kept in good shape by using an oilstone.

There are three stages in the clipping of a sheep. In the first the operator sets the sheep on its rump, and after clearing the fleece and hoofs of dirt, straw, etc., clips the wool from under the throat and down the neck to the breast. It is generally as easy to clip all around the neck down to the shoulders in this position as to do it with the sides. The breast is then cleared down to the belly, after which the shearer passes his left arm over the fore legs and lets the sheep down to a more sloping position over his left knee while he shears across the whole of the belly, over the scrobim or udder, inside of the thighs, and down to the tail on both sides. The breast and belly generally have to be done with short clips with the point of the shears. The left palm should keep the skin of the belly fairly tight, as it is apt to wrinkle. Care should be taken not to injure the teats of the ewes. Young ewes generally have heavy wool and small teats, and it is easy to injure them. The second stage consists of clearing the left side of the ewe, which is done by clipping from the belly to the backbone, following the direction of the ribs. This direction is easier than clipping broadside, as the wool creases in this direction, so that it is easy to raise the wool as it is cut in order to see where next to cut. The first half of the left side is clipped with the shoulder of the sheep resting on the knees of the shearer, and the last half by having the sheep laid out flat on its right side. The third stage is the shearing of the right side, which is a continuation of the circular clip begun on the other side, and proceeds from the backbone to the belly with one change of position, as in the case of the other side. When the sheep is completed these circular marks are generally distinguishable; they rather improve than spoil the appearance of the sheep. The test of good shearing is not alone the condition of the sheep, but the condition of the fleece. Neither the sheep nor the fleece should be mutilated. The sheep is generally injured by keeping the points of the shears close to the skin. They should be kept elevated considerably at the points and the middle of the shears or broader part kept close to the skin. To keep from spoiling the fleece the points of the shears should not be brought together while raised from the skin, as the wool will be left long there and will undergo a second cutting, so that the fleece will be destroyed by double cutting. The shears should take only a narrow strip and should take only short clips, the points of the shears not coming closer than an inch apart. A creditable job is of more importance than great speed. If a man does from fifteen to twenty a day he is doing all that the size of our flocks in Ontario demands. The new shearing machines promise to revolutionize sheep shearing even with our small flocks, as there are doubtless many breeders even in Ontario who would be glad to pay the price of one of these machines for the sake of a nice even, close job, with no danger of cutting the sheep.

It is a barbarous and unnecessary plan to tie the legs of the sheep while being sheared. As the sheep 'neath the shearer is dumb, so it is generally still if the shearer keeps going. The operation of shearing seems to keep the sheep occupied. A sheep generally does not kick much under a dex-

terous shearer, as he generally keeps it in a comfortable position and takes up its attention by keeping the shears going. Care should be taken to keep the fleece intact so that it will roll up neatly. For this reason care should be taken in turning the sheep and in keeping the fleece away from its feet. Tag locks that have not been previously removed should be cut off the fleece. Greasy wool or merely discolored wool goes in with the fleece. In rolling the fleece, begin at the rump, with sheared side on the floor, throw in the sides until the bundle is about eighteen inches wide, roll tightly and bind with twisted neck wool. Sometimes excessive foulness between the rump and udder causes slight putrefaction of the skin of the udder or parts higher up. This should be washed a few times with warm water and carbolic soap or washed clean and marshmallow ointment applied. Pine tar should be applied to cuts made by the shears and to the noses of the sheep. In cases of early shearing it is a good preventive of snuffles, one of the chief dangers of too early shearing. It acts as an antiseptic on the throat when licked and swallowed. In cases of later shearing it wards off attacks of the gadfly, but must be renewed every ten days or two weeks for this purpose.

### A Romance with Honor.

A touch of romance is added to the story of Charles Colling's visit to Robert Bakewell in the year 1782 by Mr. C. J. Bates, in his special article on "The Brothers Colling," which heads the newly-issued number of the Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England. On the authority of a niece of Mrs. Charles Colling (Mrs. Copeland, who died so recently as in January last, at the village of Staindrop), Mr. Bates says that Charles Colling "first saw the pretty face of Mary Colpitts" at Richmond, Yorkshire, when she, the eldest of eight daughters in a family of eleven, was at a boarding-school in that town. The young lady's father, agent of the Streatlam estates, lost his stewardship in consequence of his refusal to tolerate certain stated things repugnant to his conscience, and retired to his own small property at Cockfield. The narrative continues: "A match with one of his eight daughters thus lost the little it had to recommend it from a worldly point of view. Charles Colling must have been spending very freely: his father's circumstances were becoming embarrassed. It is, therefore, in every way probable that it was with a view to remove his son from this matrimonial danger that the old man listened to the advice of his good friends the Culleys, and sent him to Leicestershire in 1782 to spend some time with Bakewell." The lessons learnt by Charles Colling during his stay at Dishley are then discussed by Mr. Bates, and their immense results in the improvement of the Shorthorn; but there was another, and for the destiny of the Shorthorn, perhaps, a scarcely less important issue of that visit. As Mr. Bates tells it, "Absence, in Charles Colling's case, seems to have made the heart grow fonder. On his speedy return home he became definitely engaged to Mary Colpitts;" and later we read, "On July 23rd, 1783, Charles Colling was wedded to



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Mary Colpitts before the three lancet windows of the little old church of Cockfield." Mrs. Charles Colling, it is scarcely necessary here to repeat, identified herself so completely with her husband in his tastes and pursuits, and possessed so much tact and sound judgment, coupled with enterprise, as to give him most effective assistance in his work as the leading improver of the Shorthorn breed. One special occasion, a very critical one in Shorthorn history, may be mentioned. It was on the 30th of September, 1786, when, with his wife, he rode to Eryholme to see Mr. Maynard's herd, and under circumstances which have been several times told, in which Mrs. Charles Colling's more enterprising spirit and her persuasive powers secured for him the cow Favourite, renamed Lady Maynard, whose grandson, Favourite 252, became the progenitor of the whole of the pedigree Shorthorn race. — W. Housman, in London Live Stock Journal.