

Sheep Husbandry.

Spring Management of Sheep.

TURNING OUT TO GRASS.—In northern regions where sheep are yarded and fed only on dry feed in winter they should be put upon their grass feed in the spring gradually. It is better to turn them out before the new grass has started much and only during a portion of each day for the first few days, returning them to their yards at night, and feeding them with dry hay. If this course be pursued, they make the change without that purging and sudden debility which ensues when they are kept up later, and abruptly changed from entire dry to entire green feed. This last is always a very perilous procedure in the case of poor weak sheep, particularly if they are yearlings or pregnant ewes.

TAGGING.—After the fresh grass starts vigorously in the spring, sheep are apt to purge or scour notwithstanding the preceding precautions. The wool about and below the vent becomes covered with dung which dries into hard knobs if the scouring ceases; otherwise it accumulates in a filthy mass, which is unsightly, unhealthy, and to a certain degree dangerous—for maggots are not unfrequently generated under it. In the case of an ewe, it is a great annoyance and sometimes damage to her lamb, for the filth trickles down the udder and teats so that it mingles with the milk drawn by the lamb, and often miserably besmears its face. I have seen the lamb thus prevented from attempting to suck at all. Whether the dung is wet or dry, it cannot be washed out by brook washing; it must sooner or later be cut from the fleece, and at the waste of considerable wool.

Tagging sheep before they are let out to grass prevents this. This is cutting away the wool around the inside of the thigh, in a strip wide enough so that the dung will fall to the ground without touching any wool. Wool on or about the udder, which is liable to impede the lamb in sucking, should always be cut away—but not to an unnecessary degree during cold weather, so as to denude this delicate part of adequate protection. Tagging is sometimes performed by an attendant holding the sheep on its rump with its legs drawn apart for the convenience of the shearer. But it is best done by the attendant holding the sheep on its side on a table, or on a large box covered, except at one end, and the breech of the sheep is placed at the opening so that the tags will drop into it as they are cut away. This is the only safe position in which to place a breeding ewe for the operation, when near to lambing, unless it be on her feet—and tagging on the feet is excessively inconvenient. If a ewe is handled with violence, there is danger of so charging the position of the fetus in the womb as to render its presentation at birth more or less irregular and dangerous, but if the operation is performed as last described, and the catching and handling are done with proper care there is no danger whatever.

LAMBING.—It used to be the aim of flock-masters in the Northern States, to have their lambs yeanned from about the 1st to the 15th of May—particularly when Saxon and grade Saxon sheep were in vogue. Small flocks with abundant range would grow up their lambs, born even at this season, large and strong enough to winter well; but in the case of large flocks they were not sure or very likely to do so, except under very highly favourable circumstances. The least scarcity of good fall feed told very destructively on them—and if there were those which were dropped as late as June, they generally perished before the close of winter.

From the 15th of April to the 15th of May is now the preferred yeanning season among a majority of Northern flock-masters. Some, however, have it commence as early as the 1st of April, and those who breed rams for sale as early as the 10th or 15th of March. These very early lambs, if properly fed and kept growing, are about as much matured at their first, as late dropped ones are at their second shearing.

We have seen that Mr Chamberlain, the importer and leading breeder of the Silesian Merinos in this country, has his lambs dropped from November to February. Under the admirable arrangement of Mr. C., and under the admirable handling of his German shepherd, this works well, and a lamb is rarely lost, and being early taught to eat roots, &c., separate from their dams, they attain a remarkable earliness of maturity. Such a system would not, of course succeed with ordinary arrangements and handling nor would it be profitable for ordinary purposes.

It is understood of course, that lambs yeanned earlier than May in the Northern States, must, as a general

thing, be yeanned in stables. But this in reality diminishes instead of increasing the labors of the shepherd. The yeanning flock is thus kept together, and no time is spent traversing pastures to see if any ewe or lamb requires assistance, or in getting a weak lamb and its dam to shelter, in driving in the flock at night and before storms. And the yeanning season may thus be got through with before it is time for the farmer to commence his summer work in the fields.

PROPER PLACE FOR LAMBING.—Stable yeanning, too is safest, (though I once thought otherwise,) even in quite pleasant weather, provided the stables are roomy, properly littered down and ventilated, and provided the sheep are sufficiently docile to allow themselves to be handled and their keeper to pass round among them, without crowding from side to side and running over their lambs. While the stables should not be kept hot and tight, they should be capable of being closed all round; and they should be so close that in a cold night the heat of the sheep will preserve a moderate temperature. On the other hand, they should be provided with movable windows, or ventilators, so that excess of heat or impure air can always be avoided.

Excessive care is not requisite with hardy sheep in lambing, and too much interference is not beneficial. It is well to look into the sheep house at night, the last thing before going to bed, to see that all is well, then if all is well, many even of the best Merino shepherds leave their flocks undisturbed until morning, holding that the lamb which cannot get up, suck, and take care of itself until morning in a clean well-strawed, comfortable stable, is not worth raising. Our English shepherds, who have charge of choice breeding flocks, usually go round once in two hours through the night during the height of the lambing season. This may be rather more necessary among breeds which are accustomed to bring forth twins—for one of a pair is less likely to be missed and cared for by the mother, if it accidentally gets separated from her. But unless the sheep are extremely tame, more harm than good, even in this particular, would result from disturbing them in the night. —RANDALL'S *Practical Shepherd*.

Ewes Disowning their Lambs.

To the Editor of THE CANADA FARMER.

SIR—As you kindly invite boys to ask questions through the columns of your useful paper, perhaps you or some of your many agricultural readers will be good enough to answer this one.—How can a ewe refusing to own or care for her lambs, be made to do so?

JOHN L. HARCOURT.

York, April 19th, 1861.

NOTE BY ED. C. F.—A very good plan is to separate the ewe and her disowned lamb from the rest of the flock and place them in a small, dark enclosure together, out of hearing, if possible, of the other sheep. The ewe should be held five or six times a day while the lamb sucks. In most cases, the mother will soon take to her offspring. When she does, they may be let out, but at first they should not be allowed to mix with the other sheep, lest the ewe's indifference return. In obstinate cases of this kind, fear is sometimes appealed to as a means of awaking the natural instinct. A strange dog, a child wearing a bright-coloured mantle or the like, shewn to the ewe, will often rouse her to protect and care for her lamb. If a ewe shows indifference toward her lamb when it is first born, it is better to place a pen around them at once. Small pens, light and portable, are very useful conveniences to have about a flock of sheep.

How to Wash Sheep for Exhibition.

To the Editor of THE CANADA FARMER.

SIR,—The way that I have seen it done in England is to keep them in a nice, warm house three or four weeks prior to the time of the exhibition, washing them once a week with water only, until the last two times, when they put on a little soft soap, and at both of which times they curl every lock with curling irons. Mind and not let the irons be too hot so as to singe the wool. They also removed all the rough wool from off the head and face. Two that I saw prepared in the above manner were also fed on all the new milk they could drink, oil cake, oats and peas, and a little hay every morning, with salt once a week. One, an aged ram, took the first prize at three of the large agricultural shows in England, the other the first at the same, three among the shearlings' rams.

Malton, C. W.

R. G. T.

Washing Sheep.

To the Editor of THE CANADA FARMER:

SIR.—The usual barbarous method of washing sheep by immersion is easily avoidable in any locality, where there is a small running stream. Select a proper place and build a dam 3 or 4 feet high, within 2½ or 3 feet of the bottom, place a spout 2½ feet wide and 1½ inches thick so that a broad thin stream may be secured, let this stream fall upon a small board floor with a railing to prevent sheep from getting above or below, make a small inclosure immediately contiguous to the side of your floor. When washing time comes, one person can hand the sheep from the enclosure to two men who hold them, beneath the spout. By turning them once over, the water will carry off all the filth without much wetting the men, 30 or 40 sheep per hour may be washed with ease. Let your dam fill a few days previous to washing time, in order to have the water as warm as may be. An escape spout above your wide spout to prevent the over flow of the water, and another at the bottom of the dam to drain it off altogether, are necessary precautions. If your stream is small, select a day following a shower, when you can secure a sufficient head of water, and have your sheep in the best condition for washing easily. If your sheep are not moistened by rain it would be an advantage to pass them beneath the spout, some hours previous to their final washing. If your dam is in a pasture field and there is a friendly tree to shade your enclosure and spout, so much the better.

SIDNEY.

Worms in the Heads of Sheep.

To the Editor of THE CANADA FARMER:

SIR.—In the space of two or three weeks I have lost three of the best of my sheep and all apparently from the same cause. I observed after feeding my flock a few days in succession, that two or three of them did not feed heartily as the rest, and after a day or two they refused food altogether. They appeared stupid, noticed nothing around them, and were apparently blind. There was a continued flow of mucus from the nose, and after four or five days they died. I then proceeded to examine their heads, and found two worms in the first, about half an inch in length; in the second, there were eight varying in size, from one eighth to half an inch in length; the third refused food three days, and appeared affected the same manner as the rest. In the head of this one I found six worms of the same description.

THOMAS CULLIS.

Township of Hamilton, April 12, 1861.

Tobacco-smoke for Grub in the Heads of Sheep.

To the Editor of THE CANADA FARMER:

SIR.—I noticed one day last week a ewe running a good deal at the nose, and suspecting she had grubs in the head, I tried the tobacco smoking up the nostrils; one grub half an inch long came down, but notwithstanding all I could do she died, just three days after first showing the symptoms. She was in excellent condition, and to make the loss more unfortunate was in lamb with twins by a pure Leicester ram. We found on opening the head upwards of ten grubs differing in size. Several of my neighbours have lost, this year and last, many sheep and in my case the tobacco has proved ineffectual.

P.

King, April 20, 1861.

NOTE BY ED. C. F.—We shall be glad to have the experience of our readers in reference to the above, and other remedies suggested for grub in the head. In view of cases like that mentioned by our correspondent, it is very desirable that if there be any effectual cure for this ailment, it should be made public, for the benefit of flock masters in general.

LAMBS.—It is necessary for wool growers to know how to manage lambs, when ewes having lambs are weak. The best plan is to dig a hole in moist manure, and put the lamb in, cover it up all but the head, and leave it in that situation for half an hour, when the lamb will be able to run after the rest of the flock. I have never known this remedy to fail. —J. H. A. in *Rural American*.