

SHEEP AND SWINE.

HOW TO HANDLE SHEEP—THE PROFITS OF SHEEP RAISING.

The following article, by a correspondent of *Home and Farm*, though specially written for the South, is, most of it, well adapted to Canadian farmers:—

I have thought it best to give your readers an article on "How to Handle a Flock of Sheep," as there may be some who would engage in it who do not understand the best way.

As I have said in former articles, it is much better for new beginners to start with a flock of common native sheep, as they are much hardier than improved breeds, and will stand more exposure and rough treatment. If the sheep are small, with but little wool, then cross them with Cotswold bucks to give them size, more wool, and good fattening qualities.

Then, if the flock is small, say 100 or 200, and mutton is wanted for the family or for sale, cross these with Southdown bucks. This cross gives a sheep of good size, fine shape and good mutton—sheep that mature early and fatten well—and as a general thing pay better for wool and mutton than any other kind of sheep. But if a large flock is kept, and only for wool, then the best of all crosses is with the merino, as no other breed of sheep will so well bear flocking in large numbers. As a general thing, it is best to have lambs drop about the time that grass springs up, as they will be less trouble to take care of and the ewes can get a good bite of grass. But when early lambs are wanted, then the best time for lambing is in December. Where a good market is convenient, this latter pays better than the former, as good lambs can be ready by the first of June or sooner. At that time they always bring a fine price, and when a field of rye, wheat or barley is sown, and the ewes and lambs are put on it, and given some grain besides, the lambs grow rapidly and pay well.

The best time to alter lambs is when young—about a week old will do—but many cut the bag off when only two or three days old. This is quickly done, and with no damage. When lambs get old it is difficult to alter them without danger of their dying. Where lambs are intended for market it is best not to alter them, as they sell better than when castrated.

The pasture should be changed as often as convenient, as sheep run over the grass and do not like to eat that that has been trampled on. When it can be done, it is best to divide the pasture, that they will always have fresh grass that has not been trampled on. Sheep destroy more grass running over it than they eat.

The period of gestation with ewes is 154 days; from this a calculation can be made at what time bucks should be put with the ewes. One buck to each forty ewes is about right, although I have known one buck to serve 100 ewes. In a former article I said that a wire fence would protect sheep from dogs. One of your correspondents objected to the idea, saying that if the sheep were frightened they would injure themselves against the bars. This is true of large flocks, but it can be remedied by nailing flat rails on the post inside the wire fence, or what is better, plant a hedge of osage orange inside the fence.

I neglected to say that the tails of lambs should be cut off when they are young.

As to the money that can be made raising sheep, I believe it is equal to that of any other stock, and in connection with cotton raising will pay better than anything else on the farm. The advantages are: the mutton for the use of the family, the wool, the manure they drop on the ground, and the briars and weeds they destroy.

Mutton is now worth, in Atlanta and other southern cities, eleven cents per pound gross. This will be about \$11 per head for good mutton, and the labour of one man can easily raise and fatten 200 head.

Then the greatest value is the nice fat lamb and mutton that can be used for the family, and I doubt much if a farmer, after having for one month nice fat Southdown lamb, would ever be willing to go back to bacon again.

The south eats too much bacon. It is not healthy, and certainly not as nice as fresh meat.

I read of all the trouble that planters have to get advances. Now, if a planter has a flock of sheep equal to his cleared lands, say two sheep to every acre that he owns, the lambs and wool will pay all his expenses, and he need ask no one for an advance.

There is another great advantage in handling sheep on cotton plantations, and that is the ease with which the land can be manured, if a planter who has sheep will divide his farm into four fields—one to be in grass, one in peas, one in corn, and one in cotton; feed off the peas to hogs, and what mutton that is wanted for market, and then feed the cotton seed to the sheep on the field where the peas grew. This will so enrich the land that it will grow a good crop of corn or cotton, and this rotation kept up for a few years will bring land back to its original fertility; or the land where the peas grew can be sown to rye or some small grain, upon which sheep can be pastured while being fed with cotton seed, and the rye can be turned under next spring, and planted to corn or cotton, or the land can be sown to winter oats.

A great many men, when speaking of sheep, say get fine-blooded sheep; that they pay much better, and that a farmer has more pride in fine stock than common ones. That is all true, when a farmer has plenty of money to buy them with, and has sheds to protect them; but few beginners in the south have any spare cash, so the best way is to get the cheapest and breed up.

A cheap and good protection for sheep from rains can be made with poles or rails, so laid that one side will be open, and covered with cornstalks or hay. This is very necessary, as sheep suffer more from rain and wet than they do from cold weather. It is much better to separate the ewes before lambing time, so that they can be better protected and better fed, and if a field of small grain can be had to turn them on, it will give the lambs a good start and push them rapidly.

I have read that goats are a great protection to sheep from dogs. Of this I know not, but I have my doubts, as goats are very much afraid of dogs. I have a small flock of goats, and when they trouble the field I set the dogs on them, and they keep away for months, and I see no disposition to fight the dogs. I have read an article on the feeding of rape, or colza, to sheep a few weeks before being coupled with the ram, and it was said to produce almost invariably twin lambs. I have some sown this year, and I will try it and report. Ewes should be in good condition when they go with the buck, as this will bring good, strong lambs.

In former articles I have spoken of cotton seed as a winter feed for sheep, and I am satisfied that at present prices it is good, cheap food. But it may be that cotton seed will so advance in price that grain, hay and peas can be raised cheaper than cotton seed; of this kind, I doubt if corn sown thick in August, and cut with a mower, will not be the cheapest food that can be raised, but a field of small grain sown early will be a great help.

Pigs are able to consume far more food in proportion to their weight than either sheep or oxen.

THE SHEEP BOT-FLY.

The Sheep Bot-fly or Gad-fly (*Estrus ovis*) inhabits the nostrils of sheep during its larva or grub state. The fly is of a brown colour with yellow bands, and is about the size of a small honey bee. The eggs are deposited in the nostrils of the sheep in early summer, and, as soon as they hatch the larvæ, make their way up to the frontal sinuses, where they attach themselves by little hooks that surround the mouth. They continue to feed there upon the mucus of the abiding locality. The larvæ, which at first were creamy white, become brown in age. The grubs remain in the nostrils until the following spring, when they pass down the nostrils and drop from the animal. This outward passage is a very irritating one to the sheep, often causing them great discomfort. After dropping to the ground the grubs burrow and pass into the inactive or pupa state, from which they come out as the perfect flies in six or eight weeks.

The gad or bot-flies soon provide for a new brood of the sheep pest by depositing eggs in the nostrils as described above. Opinions differ as to the injurious effects of the sheep bots. It is difficult to assign death to them in many cases. They are certainly a great annoyance, and for this, if nothing more, measures should be taken to destroy them. The remedies are two-fold: first, the preventive of the eggs being deposited; and secondly, the removal of the grubs. It is pretty generally considered that dry and open situations are much less infested with the bot-fly than where there is thick under-bush in low and damp locations. The most common method of keeping the flies from depositing the eggs is to tar the noses of all the sheep. This tarring should be done at frequent intervals during the season of the fly. After the larvæ are once well settled in their upper nostril home, it is a hard matter to dislodge them. An irritating substance, as some kind of snuff administered that will produce violent sneezing, is probably the only method of proceeding against them. There is something very strange in this peculiar parasitism, where a part of one animal must be the home of another, and for aught we know, the grub at the same time may have some smaller animal which it unwillingly supports.

"So naturalists observe, a flea has smaller fleas that on him prey,
And these have smaller still to bite 'em, and so proceed
ad infinitum."

—Correspondent Farmers' Review.

A CELEBRATED French flockmaster, upon being pressed to say wherein the secret of his success in sheep lay, said: "It is only a matter of food and care. Give them a variety of food and plenty of it, and they will turn out mutton and wool. That is about all there is of success in any stock. But with well-bred animals to feed, the profits are largely enhanced." In the same direction a western dairyman said: "Plenty of butter and cheese lies more in good feeding than any other one thing."

A GERMAN authority claims as the result of twenty-five years' experience, contrary to the general belief there, that larger quantities of wool are obtained from small sheep in relation to a given weight than in larger kinds, the relative increase amounting to from twenty to thirty per cent. On this side the water we have long known this fact, in breeding merinos, and hence the French merinos have long been discarded for the American merinos, descendants of the Spanish sheep. They are undoubtedly the best fine-wooled sheep in the world.

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