

The Pleasures of Sheep Raising

Now don't say something sarcastic after reading that head. I admit most writers employ their time discussing the troubles of sheep raising, as if there were nothing but wearisome detail and constant annoyance in owning and caring for a flock of sheep. On the contrary I have spent many a happy hour, yes whole days, with a flock of ewes and their lambs. And there are poorer ways of spending time, too. I have never been able to account for the lack of interest with which the average farmer views the ownership of a neat little flock of say 40 to 50 ewes.

One man will tell you that sheep are deceptive, that you can't tell how much one will weigh by looking at it like you can a hog or steer. Another will observe that where one member of the flock goes the rest follow, and you can't handle them like other stock. Another objection is that sheep are particular about the quality of their food, and they get "off feed" easily. Then they say you have a world of trouble with parasites and dogs, and finally the old ewes demoralize the ranks of the lambs, and a final point they raise is that the market is as variable as a thermometer in spring.

Be it so, there is a way out of every trouble and this is as true in the case of sheep troubles as any other. You will find that the troubles that ordinarily annoy the sheep raiser disappear when he gets interested in sheep husbandry as he does in buying more land or growing bigger crops of corn.

Did you never lean over the rail of the sheep-pen some Sunday morning and quietly and joyfully study the ways of the members of the flock; watch them industriously consume the bran and oats you have spread along the shallow troughs; watch them pick out the timothy heads and the fine leaves of the hay you had brought for their rack?

Did you never on any of these occasions contemplate the fine worsteds and woollens the fleeces would make, and think that you were growing the inaugural suit of a president of the United States?

Did you never go over with eyes and hands, fingers straight not bent in, the newly purchased ram; note his bold majestic appearance, his generous build, pleasing proportions and fine dense fleece; and contemplate with keen delight the improvement you stand a chance to realize in your next crop of lambs? And if you grow a few of the best ram lambs for breeding purposes how proudly you will be able to inform prospective purchasers of the good blood lines which your lambs represent.

And did you never take reckoning, as you fed and cared for the flock, of the days when the lambs of the new "Daddy" would arrive and prove the correctness of your expectations?

Did you never watch the little lambs as they arrive mostly ears and legs covered with tightly curled dark wool—watch these odd shapes unroll and become animated? Then the wonderful happens. The awkward little body driven by instinct—by the wisdom of the universe; some power beyond our comprehension—finds the source from which it will draw sustenance and the materials for growth and activity in the days to come, and signal its success with frequent jerky movements of its amusing tail.

Did you never labor with some poor little orphan lamb to keep alive the tiny spark of life it still retained, to fool some wise but robust old ewe into believing it her own? Some way you get a lot of satisfaction in getting this one lamb started to healthy lambhood. And if you should find the bottle the last resort what joy you will have in bringing the little waif into rugged health. His amusing antics and mute appreciation of your attentions will be a source of gratification to the whole family.

What a place of activity the lamb lot becomes—a veritable three ring circus, an ovine athletic field—and if the sight of a score or more of healthy frolicsome lambs playing tag about their mothers, around the feed racks and over the straw stacks, does not bring pleasing relaxation and full compensation for all the little troubles they have caused, you are to be pitied for having a soul so devoid of sentiment.

There is joy in the more practical side of sheep raising. Did you never view with a distinct sense of pride and

a feeling of good management the clean fence corners and absence of weeds which afflict the sheepless meadows of neighboring farms? In these and many other direct and indirect ways one may derive much profit and pleasure from sheep raising.—The Farmers' Review.

WILL FEEDING HOGS PAY THIS WINTER?

War is a terrible calamity. Its harmful effects are world wide in their application and it will doubtless take many years to overcome the damage which the present eruption has done to all branches of industry. But there are few disasters, no matter how severe, which do not have a certain influence for good. Perhaps it is a refining influence or at any rate such happenings tend to, either directly or indirectly, turn men's attentions to some unprofitable practice which, under ordinary circumstances, would go unnoticed. The war has had the effect of abnormally advancing the prices for grain. From a glance at the weekly market reports it will be noticed that instead of the bulk of the grain grading No. 1 and No. 2 Northern, as was the case last year, quite the largest proportion is grading No. 3, No. 4 and lower this fall. The same general inferiority in grade is noticed concerning oats, and in addition to this fact it is recognized that both the barley and oat crops have been lighter this year. Under ordinary conditions, that is, with normal prices, a very large proportion of this inferior grain would be kept on the farms, fed to stock and shipped later on as a finished product, either beef or pork.

The question then confronting the farmer is whether the net profit last year on feeding stock was large enough to allow of there still remaining a profit with wheat worth between 22 and 27 cents more a bushel this year, with oats 15 cents higher, with barley advanced about 16 cents. The answer rests largely with the individual hog raiser, because last year's profit should be known to him and such being the case a discussion of this subject will be very valuable. The profit can be obtained in different ways, but one method which might be adopted would be as follows: It was determined that for every hundred pounds of gain made in several pens of hogs at the Agassiz Experimental Station during the winter season of 1913 it took on the average 240 pounds of grain fed in conjunction with milk and roots. This year, with the price of grain averaging 38 cents per hundred pounds more and the price for hogs remaining about the same, it will cost 91.2 cents extra to produce the same hundred pounds of gain. This being so the point upon which the feeder must satisfy himself is whether the difference between the profit he obtained last year on every hundred pounds of gain made by the hogs and the 91.2 cents increased cost of production this year will still leave a balance of profit sufficient to justify the risk and care which feeding hogs necessitates.

This question is a very important one to the farmer just now and The Guide invites a discussion from farmers from all parts of the West as to whether in their locality under existing conditions it is more profitable to feed hogs during the winter or to sell all the grain either now or in the spring.

GARDEN SEED MAY BE SCARCE

Practically all kinds of garden seed are going to be at a premium when planting time swings around next spring. This is the present outlook, according to W. A. Wheeler, secretary of the Dakota Improved Seed Company. This is due chiefly to the fact that Germany is the greatest gardening nation of the world.

The seeds used in the household gardens of America are nearly all imported from abroad, from the gardens of Germany, France, Holland and England. In these countries the gardens are cultivated principally for the purpose of supplying seed to the rest of the world, each garden making a specialty of a certain kind of seed of one variety.

From Germany, whose imports are now bottled up, comes seed for beets, mangels, carrots and radishes. France produces the best radish seeds and celery. Denmark is a heavy producer of cabbage and rutabaga seeds. Holland raises most of the bulbs, but fortunately the fall crop of bulbs already has reached America.

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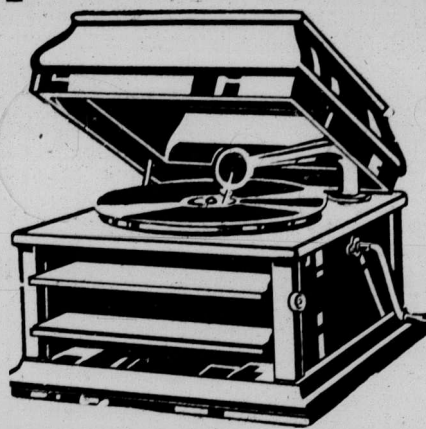
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