

# THE O. A. C. REVIEW

"THE PROFESSION WHICH I HAVE EMBRACED REQUIRES A KNOWLEDGE OF EVERYTHING."

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## Fitting Sheep for the Fall Fairs

By D. E. McEwen '18.

A SPECIAL feature of the sheep industry which has been developed to a great extent during the past few years, is the fitting of sheep for the fall fairs. Although it is pursued by comparatively few of the many flock masters, yet it is of vital importance to the sheep business and I will endeavour to outline briefly the essential points for successful fitting. This phase of the sheep industry is often regarded as superfluous and unnecessary but that impression is erroneous. Exhibitions have always been instrumental in the great improvement which has taken place in different classes of sheep, and they have also placed before the eye of the public those breeds whose merits have made them popular.

A good feeder or shepherd is not developed in a day; nor may he glean his knowledge from books and make a success at the first attempt, without first having some practical knowledge of his work. A shepherd must take pleasure in his work, have an alert eye and a keen mind which will always tell him what the sheep require—sometimes a change of feed, more exercise, or a different system of feeding. He must, at all times, feed judiciously, cultivate the habit of observing the likes and dislikes of his flock, and never become disheartened by obstacles which are placed in his way on the road to success. The young shepherd will always glean much from contact with time-worn veterans whose lives have been spent with their sheep and who always exhibit creditable stock.

The care of the flock begins not a month before the show, but during the fall of the previous year. Of course in the case of lambs (with which I will deal later), this will not apply, as they are not dropped till February or March. The good breeder and fitter picks out the promising individuals and refuses all bids on them from prospective buyers, as he is well aware that to win he must fit the best, and to produce prize winners, he must keep good foundation stock. These selected individuals do not receive any extra care during the winter, but are shorn sometime between Christmas and the end of March, depending upon the amount of fleece which they are to carry when exhibited. Some breeders do not shear their sheep entirely, but merely "cut them down heavily or stubble shear" with hand shears. The object in view in doing this is to have the sheep carry a very heavy fleece when shown, but this practice is not to be recommended, as great care must be exercised with the sheep to keep the fleece clean, and also during the hot weather of summer the sheep will suffer intensely and will feed poorly. After shearing, during the cold weather, the sheep must be confined in warm dry quarters free from draughts, and in which there is no possible chance of their receiving a chill. An animal which receives a chill will often be subject to an attack of rheumatism from which it sometimes never completely recovers. They will now require a ration of heating food such as a few