

## SHEEP SHEARING.

Sheep-shearing will soon be in season. The weather up to the present time has been so cool that little thought has probably been given to this subject, but with such weather conditions as usually prevail about the end of May, the sheep, if they are not too thin in flesh, will be more comfortable without their coats. Most of the more progressive breeders now make it a rule to shear their sheep unwashed, before turning them out on grass, finding that sheep in good condition suffer no discomfort from shearing early in April if kept in fairly warm quarters for a few days after being clipped. Buyers of wool in this country make more than a fair difference in the price paid for washed and unwashed wool, otherwise it would be better and safer for the health of sheep to shear them unwashed, as there is always some risk to the health of the sheep and the men who do the washing in cold water, and the fleece is not at all thoroughly cleansed by such washing. But if such washing is to be done, the men should wear heavy woolen under-clothing to protect them from becoming chilled, and the sheep should be carefully handled, so as to worry them as little as possible. It is cruel to force such timid animals to jump from the river bank into deep water, and to plunge them overhead in the water, as some careless and thoughtless people do. We have known cases where sheep have died in the hands of the washer from the shock of such treatment, and others so weakened by the worry that they were unable to stand when coming out of the water. There is no need for such treatment, and it should not be allowed. The sheep should be quietly led into the water and carefully handled, their heads kept above water, and the wet wool squeezed between the hands to get out as much of the dirt as possible, and the sheep quietly led out and held for a minute to get its breath before being released. It is usual to defer shearing for a week or ten days after washing to allow the natural grease to rise from the body of the sheep into the wool, which adds to its weight and keeping quality, and also facilitates the work of shearing.

Shearing may be done on a cleanly-swept barn floor, on a temporary platform of boards laid on crosspieces, or on a grass plot of ground, the sheep being penned convenient to the place to save time in catching and handling them. Clipping machines similar to those used in clipping horses are being used, with quite satisfactory success, where large flocks are kept, gasoline engines or other power being used, while in smaller flocks hand-power is found sufficient for the purpose. But for the average flock shears are used, and an experienced shearer can readily strip thirty or forty sheep in a day, while an expert may shear twice that number, or more, and a novice will be satisfied with one-half the number. The writer's choice of shears is the straight, long-bladed sort, which make quicker work than the crooked and shorter blades. The common procedure is to set the sheep on its rump, and commence clipping at the throat, opening down to the chest, then stripping the belly, the inside of the thighs and the buttocks, then returning to the cheek, shearing around from the throat to the back of the neck, and so all the way down the one side to the tail, clipping to the spine; then turning to the other side, working from the spine to the throat and belly, and finishing at the tail. Another, and perhaps a better way for the comfort of the sheep and shearer, is to commence by laying the animal on its side and placing one foot on the wool of its throat, commence clipping at the inside of the hind legs and the buttocks, then stripping the belly, the skin of which is so stretched that there is less danger of cutting into it than by the other method; then, returning to the left cheek, clipping from the throat to the spine, and continuing as before described. The expert in the use of the shears opens the blades but little, and pushes them along with scarcely any sound, leaving the shear marks in ridges, meeting at the spine like ribs, and leaving a very neat-looking job.

It is good practice to trim the feet of every sheep with a sharp knife while on the shearing floor, as the hoofs are liable to grow long during winter on soft bedding, and to harbor dirt, which may cause foot-rot or lameness from the pressure of foreign matter between the claws. It is also well to have on hand a small phial of powdered bluestone to apply in case there be any soreness found, or bleeding is caused in trimming the feet. When the ewes are sheared, any ticks that are on them will take to the lambs, where there is more wool to nestle in. For this reason, the lambs should be dipped about a week after shearing in some solution, such as one of the coal-tar preparations advertised, or in a tobacco solution, for the destruction of the ticks. It will pay well to dip the ewes at the same time, especially if there is any sign of scab in the flock, but ordinarily by pouring or rubbing on their backs what is left of the solution from the lamb dipping, the flock will be tolerably clean, and, if treated by dipping or pouring late in the fall, before going into winter quarters, will suffer no discomfort from vermin or skin disease, unless sheep from neglected flocks

are added, carrying the infection with them. For this reason, any sheep purchased, or taken in for any purpose, should be treated by dipping or pouring before being allowed with the flock. Pouring is done by opening the wool at intervals of a few inches and pouring the solution from a coffee pot or other vessel, so that the whole of the skin is covered with it.

## THE BACON TRADE AND THE FARMER.

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

The export bacon trade has reached a somewhat critical period in its history. For several years hog-raising has been one of the most profitable sources of revenue the Canadian farmer has had. Prices have averaged up well, and, where care has been exercised in the management of the business, it has furnished profitable returns. But there is grave danger now of this important trade retrograding to a pretty small compass, if it is not extinguished altogether.

To get at the facts, let us go back a little in its history. In 1900 Canada exported to Great Britain 194,996 boxes of bacon. Allowing six hogs to a box, this is equivalent to 1,169,976 hogs killed in Canada for export. During the same year, the extent of the Danish killings was 1,087,000 hogs. The Irish killings during 1900 were 416,500 hogs. Seven years later, in 1907, we find the situation has materially changed. Canada's exports of bacon fell off to 133,990 boxes, or the equivalent of 803,940 hogs; Irish killings advanced to 482,656 hogs. But the most striking feature of that year's trade was the enormous increase in Danish killings, which reached the total of 1,767,970 hogs.

These figures show a marked change in conditions, and in Canada's relation to the export bacon trade. In 1900 Canada was the largest exporter of bacon to Great Britain, her exports exceeding those from Denmark by 82,976 hogs. In 1907 Denmark had increased her exports by 680,970 hogs, and Canada had decreased hers by

nearer the market. Packing-houses are small, and within driving distance. The farmer delivers his own hogs at the packing-house, and is paid according to how they kill out—firsts, seconds, and so on. He has some disadvantages, however, as compared with the Canadian farmer. He has to buy more feed for his hogs. He has not the competition among packers for hogs to keep their establishments running that our farmers are supposed to have. The price for bacon is arranged by a central committee, and the value of hogs is fixed accordingly. This may be an advantage in that prices are more regular than in Canada. But there is no scramble for hogs, as in Canada, when prices go beyond what the market will warrant paying. The packing-houses are run partly by private individuals, and partly by co-operative concerns owned by the farmers. On April 27th last, these private concerns were producing bacon to sell at 52s., and the co-operatives to sell at 50s. In the case of the latter, a certain amount is reserved till the close of the season to cover contingencies, which will account for the difference in price. On the same date, Canadian packers were producing bacon to sell at 55s. 6d., and let them out even. On that date, also, the Danish farmer was paid for his hogs on a basis of 40s. to 41s. by the co-operatives, and 43s. by the private concerns. For the week of the big run, as above, the Danish farmer was paid on a basis of 37s. for his hogs. The price there varies, as here, according to the market.

This is a brief summary of the situation, as shown by the experiences of the past few years. The phase of the question that is of prime importance to the Canadian farmer is that the Danish farmer is gradually but surely taking his export bacon market from him. Can he afford to let him do so? Is Canada's export bacon trade of so little moment that we can afford to let it go by default, and the country be none the worse for it? Will a cessation of this trade altogether lessen materially the profits which our people make out of their farming operations? Is

this branch of trade worth catering to? Is it worth making a sacrifice to retain? A sacrifice will certainly have to be made to regain the ground we have lost during the past year or two. Denmark has, during the past six months, been flooding the British market with her bacon and displacing Canadian. Is it worth while to keep in the game and regain and retain our hold on the export trade? These are some of the problems in connection with this industry that confront the Canadian farmer at the present time.

I have tried to be fair in the facts, as presented, and to judge of the situation from a purely export-market standpoint. To many farmers, the packer is the fellow who is preventing progress, and who is to blame for the condition in which this important trade finds itself at the present. It is not our mission to defend him or condone his offences in any way. He is a factor in the Canadian trade who cannot very well be dispensed with just now. Co-operative packing establishments were tried a few years ago, and with what success everyone knows. If the business is to be continued, the packer, as we have him to-day, becomes necessary to its success. He claims that he has lost money in the export bacon trade, and has had to add other branches to his business in order to make it profitable. But as to that, the farmer is not concerned. The packer has equipment for handling at least three times as many hogs as he is now getting. So long as these conditions remain, there will be more or less of a scramble to get hogs, and the farmer will get all the market will allow, and in some cases, perhaps, a little more.

But be this as it may, and judging of the business on its merits, is the farmer justified in keeping in the hog-producing business and in increasing the supply, for the supply of hogs must be increased if the export trade is to be maintained? We think he is. Covering a period of years, it is safe to say that hog-raising has been one of our most profitable branches of agriculture. To leave out the periods of high prices, and judge of the business solely from the low-price periods, as many do, is not treating the industry fairly. For several years previous to the recent period of low values and increased cost of feed, the



Sheep-feeding on a Colorado Ranch.

(Courtesy of National Live-stock Bulletin.)

366,036 hogs, her exports for that year being considerably less than one-half of the total exports from Denmark. Even in the face of these figures, which are gleaned from reliable sources, the situation would not be so serious were it not for the fact that the decrease of Canadian exports, on the one hand, and the increase of Danish, on the other, have been more or less gradual. For several years the Danish farmer has been steadily increasing his output of hogs. The Canadian farmer's operations have been largely of the spasmodic order, blowing hot and cold as the price varied, and as his fulminations against the packer grew strong or weak. This disparity in Canadian and Danish exports is further accentuated by a comparison of the first three months of 1907 and 1908. During January, February and March, of 1907, Canada's exports of bacon were equivalent to 215,358 hogs, and Denmark's 392,000 hogs, an increase of 176,642 in favor of the latter. Contrast this with the figures for the first three months of the present year. Canada's decreased to 166,560 hogs, while Denmark's ran up to 510,606 hogs, an increase of 118,600 over the corresponding period of 1907, or 344,040 hogs more than Canada exported for the same period. And this is not all. Danish killings still keep up to a high level. For the week ending May 2nd, there were 57,060, making a record. During 1907 the average Danish killings were about 35,000 weekly, as compared with about 22,000 in 1900. In 1900 Canada's weekly killings for export ran about 24,000, as compared with about 17,000 in 1907, and about 13,000 during the first three months of 1908.

In some respects the Danish farmer has an advantage over his Canadian competitor. He is