

THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE & HOME MAGAZINE

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Emergency Crops!

From numerous Western Ontario points complaints reach us of destruction of winter wheat and other crops, chiefly those sown on sod land, by the cutworm. Many fields are being plowed up to be resown with peas or millet, probably as good crops as could be chosen for the purpose. Vegetation has been astonishingly rapid, a great deal of red clover being in bloom nearly a week ago, but it is very short in many cases, owing to lack of rain. Old timothy meadows are anything but promising, and our readers where such conditions prevail should sow for emergency crops. Last year a big corn crop was the salvation of many a farmer, and it is not too late yet for planting. A crop of millet will furnish grand food for stock, and a patch of rape will be a great help, for the sheep especially, in the early fall. Even should the season turn out more favorable later on, the extra fodder will save other grains, etc., that may be sold. In any event make provision for a possible shortage.

STOCK.

Sheep on the Farm.

Sheep raisers "have the floor" in this issue of the FARMER'S ADVOCATE, and it affords us pleasure to devote considerable space to a subject so closely allied with success in farming. There is a pretty free expression of opinion as to breeds and their respective merits, and what to the general reader will prove of great everyday value—practical suggestions to be observed in the pursuit of this important branch of live stock husbandry, which, without the aid of any "booming" process, continues to hold so secure a place in the esteem of thoughtful men. We commend a careful perusal of the views expressed, some of which embody the lessons of a life-long experience.

The Advantages of Sheep Raising Fairly Stated—Practical Suggestions.

To the Editor FARMER'S ADVOCATE: Our sheep have come through the winter in much better condition than we expected they would, considering the unusual scarcity of fodder on the farm as a result of the extreme drouth of last summer, following the destructive frost which struck the Province in the month of May. Clover hay, which is the principal fodder for sheep, was a complete failure, and had we not been so fortunate as to get a fair crop of peas we should have been at a loss how to carry our sheep through the winter. Our peas were sown late (finished sowing May 23rd) and they never got sufficient rain to wet to the bottom of the inverted sod on which they were sown, but two or three light showers came in time to send them forward when we had almost lost hope of them, and we harvested a nice crop of bright, clean vines, well covered with sound and good peas. When we have a fair crop of peas we have never any fears about the successful wintering of our sheep. If we are fortunate in getting them harvested without rain, the straw—threshed with a flail, and not too cleanly threshed—makes excellent fodder, but if we have a wet harvest and the straw is damaged we feed the peas unthreshed, and when judiciously fed there is no better feed for sheep. Of course the feeding must be light, for very little of such fodder will keep sheep fat enough for breeding purposes. For several winters we have kept the most of our breeding ewes at an off farm where no roots are stored, and their only feed up to lambing time has been peas in the straw—no roots and no water but the snow they have access to in a roomy yard, and we never had as strong and healthy lambs. The ewes have plenty of milk and are in fine condition. I know it will be said that sheep need water and ought to have it, and I do not doubt that a little water would be good for them, but, on the other hand, I feel sure that if they had free access to all the cold water they would take after eating dry and heating food there would have been more danger of sickness among the ewes and the lambs would not have been so strong and active. My experience has satisfied me that liberal feeding of roots to in-lamb ewes brings weak and flabby lambs, especially when the ewes do not get sufficient exercise.

Our lambing season this year was very successful. We had a large proportion of twins and lost but one lamb, and that one of twins. Two have dropped out since, but that is not unusual. We are raising more than a lamb and a half to the ewe and all are going on well on the early grass, which has come so opportunely to help those who were so scarce of fodder.

When we consider how little work and expense there is connected with the keeping of a small flock of sheep it is unaccountable that we find so few sheep on the farms of Canada. The plainest buildings are good enough to safely and successfully house sheep. There is no need of cleaning out stables. Very little bedding is needed—the refuse of the rough fodder thrown to them is sufficient litter to keep them dry and clean. They are quiet and contented, and always give a fair return for all they get. The ewes deplicate themselves every year, and thus, counting their wool in, pay semi-annual dividends that are as good and as sure as we can reasonably expect from any investment. In summer they do well on the shortest pasture, and they consume a great deal of rubbish in the way of weeds which other stock will not eat, and thus they play an important part in keeping the farm clean. Seven years ago I took up a worn-out farm full of weeds and dirt. I have kept it well stocked with sheep and clover, and it has been restored to fertility and is now one of the cleanest farms in the county. There is a good demand for sheep and lambs for the market, at prices which are relatively at least as good as for any other class of stock; indeed, much better when the cost of production is taken into account. There are fewer breeding sheep in the hands of the farmers of this country than at any time in the last twenty years. On a very large proportion of the farms of Ontario there are none, and we have no doubt the same remark applies to all the Provinces. Last fall, in view of the scarcity of fodder for the winter, many farmers sold out all their sheep, and it did seem strange that the part of their stock that would cost least to winter over should be the first to go. The only way one can account for it is that the sheep were the only stock on the farms that were in fit condition to sell, for while the cattle and horses were bone poor the sheep had grown fat on the

short grass, which really suits them best; but is it not a case of "selling the goose that lays the golden egg?"

As to what breeds are most prevalent in this district, we may say, in a word, Cotswolds. We do not know of a single flock of registered sheep of any other breed in the county, and very few grades of any other breeds. Cotswolds have held this county almost intact for over thirty years. Of course this does not prove that they are the best breed, but perhaps it is evidence that they are well suited to soil and conditions that prevail here. Other breeds have come and gone, but that does not say that they would not succeed here. The fault may have been in the men who handled them more than in the sheep or the soil, and we are quite sure that such was the case, for I am satisfied that any breed of sheep would do well in this county if given a fair chance. I think it is best that as a rule one breed of sheep should prevail in each district. It is so in Britain, the home of the breeds, and experience, the best of teachers, has proved it to be best. It may be asked, what are the advantages? One is that if a breed has proven itself well suited to the conditions of a district it is risky to make a change. Another reason is that breeders having the flocks of others in sight may make favorable exchanges of stock rams which have proven good sires at moderate prices or by an even trade. Another and an important reason is that buyers are attracted to the district where they can secure carloads of the breed they want or can make selections from a number of flocks with less expense and a saving of time. I have been looking at this matter for forty years and I don't see that it is any nearer being settled than it was forty years ago which is the best breed. I have not changed my mind, although I think I am open to conviction, as to which is the best breed for me with my environments. It is really not nearly so important what breed a man has as that he makes the best use of the breed he has.

The question has been asked, what is the best cross for "spring lamb"? I am not in favor of crossing the pure breeds; I see no good end to be gained; but I am strongly in favor of crossing the scrub with good sires of any of the pure breeds and keeping on with the same cross till the type of the pure breed is fixed and then sticking to it to the end of the chapter. If I wanted "spring lamb" before Christmas I would breed Dorsets or cross with them on other sheep, but I can have all the Cotswold lambs I want in January, which is early enough spring for me. I have had them come the last week in December without any effort, and have no doubt I could have plenty of them early in December if I made arrangements to have plenty of fresh green feed for the ewes to go on after their lambs were weaned.

There has been great demand the last two or three years for long-wooled rams for crossing upon the grade Merino ewes of the western territories of the U. S., and we have never known rams so closely sold out as they were last fall. We have about one hundred yearling rams for that trade, most of which were bought in the fall as lambs, besides about fifty grand registered ones of our own breeding, suitable for heading pure-bred flocks. Our stock of ewes is not above normal and we have none to sell. The prospect for the sheep business is bright. We don't expect high prices, but good paying prices are as good as assured. Peel Co. J. C. SNELL.

Sixty Years' Experience With Sheep--The Merits of the Shrop.

To the Editor FARMER'S ADVOCATE:

SIR,—Pasture, apparently to relieve us from the effects of a scarcity of fodder, made an early growth this season. We have about our usual flock: one hundred ewes, with 120 lambs, thirty shearing rams and same number of ewes. All our breeding ewes are imported, and our stock ram was one of A. E. Mansell's prize rams in 1893. His lambs have been great winners for two years, and we have a beautiful lot of yearlings from him. We have also sixty Cotswold rams; all have gone to the fields in fair condition, notwithstanding we fed no hay.

We think that sheep breeding might be considerably increased in this country to the advantage of the farmers. In sixty years' experience we can say that our flock has paid its way every year, and nearly always has returned a handsome balance of profit. We cannot say the same for horses, cattle, or pigs.

The breeds most prevalent in our district are Shropshire and Cotswold. High grades of these two breeds are the common sheep of the district, and they are, of course, the most popular with the farmers for all purposes. Thirty-one years ago we had a few Shropshires, and we liked them very much indeed. We could not sell them at that time, however, for everybody wanted Cotswolds. We silently decided that when the day came, as come it would, when Shropshires were appreciated at their real worth, we would have them to keep and to sell. We could only advise others to do as we have done. No breed of animals has ever been spread over the greater part of the globe in such a short time as has the Shropshires. They seem to cross well with all breeds, thrive in all climates, and hold every person for a friend after having a fair chance to enlist him.

In 1896 we took the first prize for a Shropshire shearing ram at Toronto, and we have seldom