

Founding the Farm Flock

The advantages at the hand of any intelligent farmer who wishes to establish a flock of sheep for use in a commercial way at the present time are very much greater than prevailed many years ago in the older provinces of the Dominion. Then the only material at hand for the foundation of a flock of grade sheep was the 'Common Sheep,' as they were frequently called; and common they were indeed in at least two important ways in which the word is used. They prevailed everywhere on the farms of the English-speaking people of the Dominion and they lacked every indication of good breeding, as evidenced by the qualities making for a present-day first-class carcass. But they were hardy and looked out for their own sustenance so well as to be very little expense to their owner in that way. Yet they were nimble at scaling the fences of those days, and often made trouble between neighbors by feeding on the growing crops.

They were rather long legged, shallow bodied and thin fleshed. Their wool was not very fine, tho dense and short and usually quite coarse on the hips and thighs, and worse still, became very scarce before two years old, and quite bare on the under parts of the neck. Those who used these sheep as a foundation for flocks found that it took several generations from the use of good mutton type rams of the pure breeds before their crop of lambs would have the uniformity necessary to success.

At the present time it is quite different, and the beginner has grade flocks practically pure of the several breeds to choose from, and can commence with a selected flock of grades of whichever breed he may fancy, practically pure to the type of the pure bred. For many years the best breeders of all the breeds have been striving to establish in their respective flocks the same ideal form of carcass, varied only in size. It will be necessary to have this ideal in view when making selections. A well-covered back is required, broad because of well sprung ribs, and wide loin, the flesh smooth and elastic to the touch—if in good condition, and not soft and blubbery, nor yet hard. In no case should the backbone be in evidence to the touch, if the animal is in good flesh. We

should look for long, deep, full quarters, well filled in the twist, and inside and outside muscles of the thighs. In the points given we have the most valuable parts of the carcass. But in addition we require a good depth of rib, good depth and width in front and at the heart, to give room for the vital organs, so we may have sturdy constitution. With these will go a medium length of neck, stronger at the shoulders and well set on. A clean intelligent head and eyes, with nothing sluggish in appearance, bright eyes with reasonable prominence are all desirable.

Quality in Bone and Wool

We must be careful to select ewes with good firm bone, and strong, short pasterns, not set back too far, feet of fair size and good shape, the legs straight and set squarely under them. We must pay a great deal of attention to the wool also, in making selections. The heavy shearers—when the quality is right—of whichever breed we have, are the most profitable, and in order to get weight of fleece we must have density of fibres, as well as length of staple. It is of great importance to have it uniform in quality all over the body, not running to coarseness on the thighs.

After we have clearly in mind the type we want, then the thing of greatest importance to us is to have our selections uniform. There is profit in this because we can sell a uniform bunch of lambs to better advantage, and for a higher price. By uniformity more is meant than that the flock be of the same type, and similar

A great deal of emphasis has been laid during the past few years upon the value of sheep to the Western farmer. Every farmer has a more or less definite idea of the advantages which sheep have, both as a direct money making proposition and in improving the cropping value of the farm on which they are kept. But even yet too few farmers realize the value of the "golden hoof." In his annual report J. C. Smith, livestock commissioner for Saskatchewan, says concerning sheep: "At no time in the history of the Dominion has the sheep industry been on a more favorable and profitable footing. With a fairly high and steady price for mutton and lamb, which has shown a gradual upward tendency thruout the year and an unprecedented demand for Western wool which has raised prices to high water mark, the sheep breeding industry can conservatively be said to be in a prosperous condition. So much so that the annual loss to Western Canada in failing to keep and produce one-tenth of the sheep that she has the capital, the feed, the land and the climate to handle is incalculable. Saskatchewan had in 1914 177,752 sheep, or, roughly speaking, one sheep for every four people, while in the same year there were seeded 2,500,000 acres to oats or nearly four acres for every unit of population. In the first ten months of 1914 there were imported into Western Canada 112,838 head of sheep and 4,015,152 pounds of mutton and lamb, and the Dominion for the year ending March 31, 1914, imported wool and manufactures of wool to the value of \$28,556,557." With a steady market and constant demand for sheep and their products many more farmers should keep sheep. Why don't they do so? What is the objection? The Guide will welcome experiences with sheep raising, either favorable or unfavorable, from its readers.

in size. It means not only they look alike, but that the individual sheep be uniform in itself, that it has general uniformity, good conformation, not weak in places and extra good in others.

Selecting a Ram

In selecting a ram, too, this individual uniformity is particularly important, since in this at least he is really half the flock, and with his better breeding is likely to reproduce his conformation and type in the lambs. A medium size will be found the most desirable, with an

purpose. Continuous indiscriminate crossing is always suicidal.

The Size of the Flock

A flock of fifteen ewes should be the minimum on a farm of one hundred acres which is devoted to mixed farming. Such a flock can be increased with experience, but not beyond twenty to twenty-five, unless it is desired to make a special business of sheep raising. With good management and good care, an increase thru lambs can be expected of from 150

the highest price. If fed on for marketing in March, which is usually the most profitable, the rape makes a good foundation for the winter feeding. These supplementary foods are desirable to develop the flock profitably.

Time to Purchase Ewes

The best time to purchase the ewes is August, just after the lambs have been weaned. We can purchase then as cheaply as at any time and can make the best selection if choosing ewes that have raised lambs, as their milking qualities and strength can be ascertained. Besides we will have them in good time to prepare for the next crop of lambs.

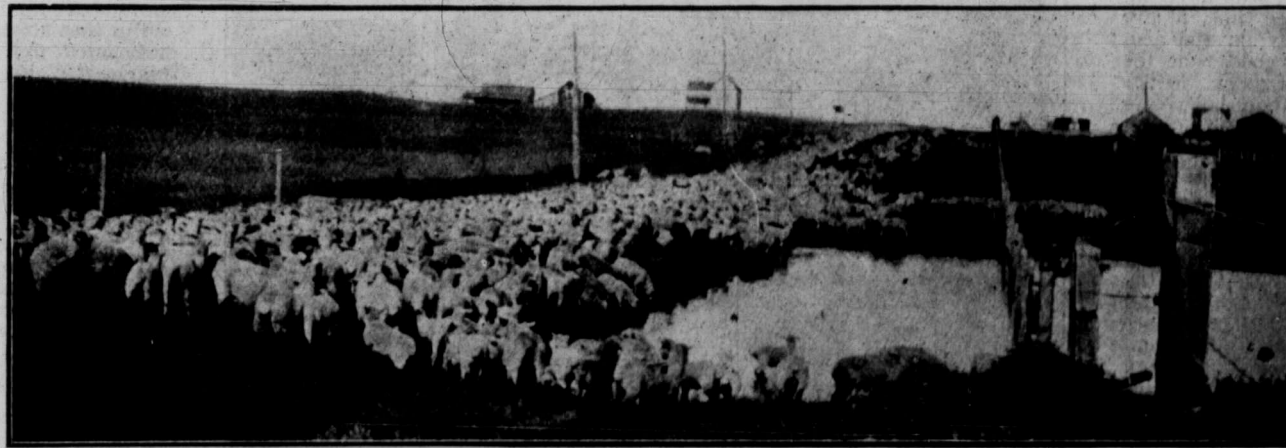
While there is one additional year's usefulness in a shearling ewe, one that is sixteen or seventeen months old, if she has not had a lamb, still as a rule two-shear ewes are to be preferred in selecting. We have then a guarantee that they are breeders, and have the advantage of being able to judge of those likely to be the best breeders and best milkers. However, very few shearling ewes prove non-breeders. These ewes should have the run of the stubble fields, not sown to clover, or old pastures, until near the middle of September and then given access to a rape or clover field. If this green food is not plentiful, it will pay to feed a small quantity of grain to make sure the ewes are strong and thriving well when bred. This is the secret of having a large percentage of twins dropped. It may be well, as claimed by some, to breed from ewes themselves twins, but even so, they must be strong and thriving well to have the best results because not only will we have larger returns, but the lambs will be stronger and more likely to live and do well, providing the treatment of the ewes continues good up to lambing time. The ram also should be hearty, rugged and healthy at the time of coupling. Usually stronger lambs are sired by rams one year old or over, yet for a flock of about fifteen ewes, a well developed lamb will give good results, and may be more cheaply purchased, as well as being a year younger and perhaps more valuable when a change of ram is to be made. But when the number of ewes runs up to twenty or more, then an older ram should be secured.

In case a lamb is used on from fifteen to twenty-five ewes, which should be avoided if possible, he should not run with them, but should be kept separate or with, say, one ewe for company, and allowed with the flock only long enough each morning to serve once such ewes as are ready. More than that is needless and helps to destroy the vitality and usefulness of the ram. If short of help, or if one does not wish to take the time, which need not be much, a ram may be allowed to run with a small flock of ewes during the mating season without much apparent injury, if the ram be matured. However, it is profitable to control a lamb, as he is often more ambitious, and more likely to injure himself, and naturally produces weaker lambs. The profit from the flock is largely dependent upon the number of uniformly well grown lambs we raise, and which we can have by these reasonable precautions, and after care and attention, if the ewes are good milkers.

Wintering

The flock should be strong and in good flesh when winter sets in, and they will be, if reasonable provision has been made for fall feed. If in good condition they will be the more cheaply wintered. They can be kept doing well on clover hay and a few roots—say three pounds per head each day and a liberal feed of pea straw. If a little grain be fed for about four weeks before they lamb—one pound per head each day of mixed oats and bran is good—

Continued on Page 16



Western farmers are proving that there is good profit in sheep raising, whether it be from the small farm flock or from sheep raising on an extensive scale. Part of Simon Downie and Sons' flocks at Carstairs, Alta.

inclination to good size rather than undersize if varying any from medium. Roominess should be looked for in the ewes, as those of that form will be more likely to be good mothers. Avoid a ewe that is short in the ribs and has a 'tucked up' appearance. In the ram we must have the same good qualities of carcass and of wool, and should look for more compactness and strength, in appearance a good lot of masculinity, a strong, bold carriage, stronger bone, and withal not any above the average size for rams of his breed. He must be pure bred and typical of the breed we have selected. It is almost invariably a mistake to cross, except for a special

per cent. to 175 per cent., and it should be the latter.

A flock of this size will, if given opportunity, clean up a very great number of the weeds on a farm, yet we must not make the mistake of expecting them to get all their living off the weeds and waste places of the farm, even tho it is a good help. Provision for feed supplementary to the pasture, such as rape, which can be very cheaply produced, is generally very profitable and should always be counted on. Lambs after being weaned gain in weight very rapidly on rape, and when oats are fed along with it towards the finishing for the market, the flesh is firm and good, likely to bring



After a year or two's experience in grading up the flock, a bunch of uniform lambs on some prepared pasture like rape will be a permanent source of revenue on every up-to-date farm in the West.