

POSSIBILITIES OF SHEEP RAISING

Under the system of crop rotation so widely prevalent throughout the Northwest today, a large amount of roughage and pasture crops is annually produced, and must needs be utilized upon the farm by some kind of live-stock if satisfactory returns are to be procured, and the proper fertility added to the soil. Cattle and sheep are the animals best adapted by nature for the consumption of roughage, and hence are most generally used for this purpose. Though this theory may be at variance with that universally adopted, we believe that of these sheep are the preferable animals to grow. The handling of dairy cattle requires the construction of expensive buildings for shelter and the hiring of manual labor, ever difficult to secure and unsatisfactory in service; in beef cattle the investment is large, and the returns are slow and uncertain. In case of sheep, however, not one of these objections obtain. Inexpensive from the very first, requiring but a small investment to secure a sufficient number to start a flock, sheep can be sheltered and maintained at a price far lower than is the average belief. Figures adduced from all statistics obtainable, herewith produced, conclusively establish this fact.

Under present prices for lumber and building materials, a barn which will suitably shelter 50 ewes and their lambs can be constructed for \$325. Allowing interest of 6 per cent on this money for 25 years, during which period it is believed the barn will last, the cost of the shelter for each ewe and lamb would be thirty-five cents yearly. Another item to be considered—the one which constitutes a veritable bugbear to sheep growing in the eyes of the average farmer—is the cost of fencing the summer pasture. The fencing of a five-acre field, which would be necessary to maintain fifty ewes and lambs, plus the interest on the ten-year investment, would amount to \$85, or the fabulous sum of 17 cents yearly for the individual ewe and her lamb.

Now, as to the cost of maintaining the ewe, which of course constitutes the chief item of expense. Experiments carried on at this institution upon land in only fair condition, and with only a limited amount of labor put upon it, show that the cost of seeding and the rental of land for summer pasture amounts to but 40 cents for each ewe and lamb—and the fall pasture consisting of rape sown in grain is but 4 cents. The winter ration of roughage and grain at average prices costs about \$1.20 for each ewe. Allowing 24 cents—as interest on the money invested in the ewe—we find the total cost of the ewe and her lamb to be but \$2.40.

These are the liabilities; what are the assets? In addition to improving the fertility and physical condition of the soil on which she has pastured, a ewe yields two annual returns to her owner, one in the form of wool, the other in offspring. Moreover, the value of the ewe herself is in no way lessened; she is worth just as much as she ever was; or in case she is not she may at any time be sold and her lamb retained. A lamb sells easily on the market today for 5 cents a pound. Allowing sixty pounds as the unquestionable weight of the lamb in the fall, the income from this source would be \$3.00.

Statistics accumulated in Minnesota for the last 30 years show the average.

weight of a ewe's fleece is seven pounds, and the average price paid therefore is 19 cents a pound. Adopting these figures which are admittedly low—the fleece would be worth \$1.33, thus making the total annual income from the ewe \$4.33. Subtracting the total cost from this sum, we have \$1.93. This represents the amount the farmer receives for labor he has expended which in case of each sheep is so slight as to be almost unmentionable. On no other roughage consuming animal, we believe, can so handsome returns be annually netted, and when we pause to consider that even this does not represent the maximum amount of income that can be secured, we come to realize how great possibilities there are for the farmer in sheep growing.

If this sum can be realized on a scrub or average sheep, what might not be cleared on one that through selection and breeding has been made to produce an added pound or two of wool, and lambs that will bring one cent more a pound upon the market? Such an idea might one day have been hissed as ridiculous, but the present development of science leads up to regard nothing as impossible. The time is now far past when a ewe was looked upon as a ewe, and one considered quite as desirable as another.

Today we recognize the fact that the fleece conformation and transmittal powers of ewes differ widely, and according as they differ we say this ewe is better than that; she has a better fleece, she yields a better lamb crop.

Before you are two ewes, one the kind that is commonly seen on the Minnesota farm, the other the kind that ought to be there. We confidently say the kind that ought to be, because we know that one of the fleece and type of the animal on your right will yield a larger quantity and better quality of wool, and a lamb that will sell for at least one cent more a pound upon the market than will the one on your left. A glance at the fleece of these two ewes clearly shows us that the fleece of the one is much purer denser and more uniform than that of the other; it serves as a better protection to the ewe, and keeps her from contracting colds, thus not only conserving her health but also lending to the production of a stronger, more desirable fleece. The price paid for wool is dependent upon its quality; if, then, one would increase his income from this source he should retain only sheep that have a fleece at least as good as that of this animal. It is undoubtedly possible to increase (and with little difficulty too) the average yield of wool one pound, and to improve the quality to such an extent that it will sell for 2 cents more a pound.

Basing our statement upon the theory that like produces like, we say that the lamb of this ewe will be more valuable than the one from that. As this ewe is broad in the back, well rounded, in the rib, plump in the leg and shoulder, compact of body and thickly and uniformly fleshed so is her lamb likely to be. As that ewe is narrow of back, flat in the ribs, thin in the leg and shoulder, rangy in body, unevenly, thinly fleshed, so is her lamb likely to be. Which will you choose? If wise in your judgment, undoubtedly the former.

It is an unquestionable fact that for such a lamb, the butcher or local dealer is paying and will continue to pay one cent more a pound, live weight—60 cents more for the 60 pound lamb, because a lamb of this type yields a larger percent of dressed to live weight, probably 3 or 4 per cent more on the average; because it contains a smaller percent of bone, and cheap meat, and a larger per cent of expensive cuts, such as the loin, ribs and leg; and because its flesh is of better quality, more juicy and tender, more expansive. Certainly reasons enough why the buyer pays more, and why the progressive farmer should grow only lambs of this kind.

The growing of such lambs only may seem to some theoretical and difficult, but it depends solely upon the selection of ancestors of the desired fleece and conformation, and intelligent selection lies within the possibility of all.

Adding, then, the figures representative of the increase of income possible to every grower, we find the sum to be 95 cents. Certainly a palpable amount, one worth striving for. Since the cost of maintaining a ewe of such qualities as will increase the income of this amount is no greater, but, if anything, less than that of maintaining the ordinary ewe, all we need do to find the total possible income is to add \$.95 to \$1.93, making \$2.88, almost \$3.00. Who would have guessed that one small ewe could annually earn that much for her owner? Who could ask for better interest on an investment? Who could demand any better wages for labor expended?

And yet, there is still one more way of increasing the annual income from sheep—not perhaps on the part of the individual ewe, but on the part of the flock. That way is by increasing the per cent of lambs to ewes. On many farms in Minnesota and throughout the Northwest a flock of 100 ewes produces not more than 40 to 50 lambs annually. We believe that it lies within the range of every farmer's possibility to raise this yield to 125 or 150 per cent. This can be achieved by keeping records of each ewe's achievements and retaining only those that regularly produce and rear to maturity one or two lambs annually. Intelligent selection of this sort lies at the basis of all flock improvement.

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FARMER'S CYCLOPEDIA OF LIVE-STOCK.

We received from the publishers, the Orange-Judd Company, the other day, a copy of the work which Messrs. E. V. Wilcox, Ph.D., and C. B. Smith, M.D., have prepared, covering the whole field of American live-stock. The book is a most comprehensive one. It is a volume of nearly 800 pages, well printed and illustrated, presenting in a systematic way the established facts which constitute the foundation of animal husbandry. The subject is taken up in twelve parts. In the first five the general principles of stock-raising are discussed, the history of domestic animals, feeding, diseases, the business aspects of stock farming, and the disposal of animal products. In the other seven divisions, the different breeds of domesticated animals are considered, horses, mules, beef and dairy cattle, sheep, swine, poultry, etc.

The Cyclopaedia of Live-Stock has been built up on lines similar to those followed by the same authors when they prepared their "Cyclopaedia of Agriculture," published in 1904. The basis of both works is the bulletins and reports of the various experiment stations, supplemented by the writers' own experience and observations. They present in a concise and readily available form those experimentally established facts and principles which are the most reliable guides in agriculture and animal husbandry, but which the average farmer has neither the time nor inclination to dig out from the vast mass of experimental data from which these works have been compiled. Within the past twenty years our experiment stations have accomplished a tremendous amount of work in their investigations of animal husbandry problems. Yearly large additions have been made to the literature on this subject until the reading of all the matter published on live-stock and agriculture in a year is almost a hopeless task. It is well, therefore, to have someone winnow out, arrange and systematize the information extant in these two important branches of industry. This the authors of the present work have most skillfully done. It would be only but an exaggeration to call the book perfect. No book was ever written that is. But it contains the latest and best thought on live-stock affairs, with excellent illustrations.



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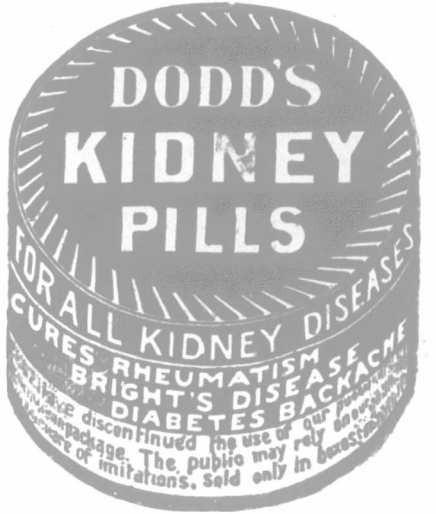
Mrs. W. J. Wilson, Tessier, Sask., tells of her experience in the following words:—"I wish to tell you of the good I have found in Dr. Fowler's Extract of Wild Strawberry. Last summer my little girl, aged two years, was taken ill with Summer Complaint, and as my mother always kept Dr. Fowler's in the house when I was a child, I seemed to follow her example as I always have it also. I at once gave it to my baby as directed and she was at once relieved, and after a couple of doses were taken was completely cured."

is indexed in a way that appeals to the busy reader, well bound, well printed, and may be ordered through this office at the publishers' price, \$4.50.

The other book, the Cyclopaedia of Agriculture, is devoted to field and garden crops, fruit growing, dairying, poultry, and to some extent to live-stock. Experimental results here, too, are the basis. But the work is not of the dust dry character of station bulletins. It is a volume of 600 pages, illustrated and indexed, an invaluable text book on agriculture for farmers and students. The publishers' price is \$3.50.

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