

MAKING A START WITH SHEEP

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MANY and varied are the inquiries being made today in connection with the raising of sheep. And why? Is it not only human nature showing up again in the fact that as soon as anything begins to soar in price, everyone wants a slice? And then on top of this, we as a people are not shepherds and we feel more or less doubtful about the proper handling of this particular slice. Remember, of course, that I am saying nothing about these high mutton and wool prices. The fact remains that they exist and in looking at the situation from different angles, it seems more than likely that they will continue to exist long after the cessation of hostilities in Europe. Appearances would indicate that the sheep industry is on the crest of a boom such as it has never experienced before.

This, then, is why people, not only farmers but our urban friends as well, are asking about these profit making wool and mutton creatures. The dog nuisance, the coyote, the need of more or less fencing on these western farms and the prevalence of spear-grass in some localities are all passed up and many of us feel that we must have sheep, come what may. We are determined to combat all these hindrances and after all they can be combated in the proper manner.

The Beginner's Troubles

The beginner, moreover, not only has these hindrances to think of but there are many little ins and outs that he misses at first glance. He has to be prepared for certain disappointments such as a low lambing percentage caused possibly by improper care of ewes at time of lambing or loss in the flock through disease, the result of damp and badly ventilated quarters. In short, though the keeping of sheep entails but little hard physical labor, there is a constant care and vigilance to details at certain times of the year that characterises every true sheepman. When such care and vigilance is acquired by the beginner he will undoubtedly find his flock of sheep the best paying agricultural investment on the farm.

Possibly too many of us, attracted by the remunerative feature of sheep raising, are inclined to say: "Oh, well, there is no reason in the world why I cannot manage a small flock of sheep. All I have to do is buy them and they do the rest by rustling for themselves." We have read so much and heard so much about these ovines that we are full of confidence and optimism as to our prowess and knowledge of the business. Reading, of course, is very necessary but it alone will not get a man very far on the road to success in any agricultural line. Mixed with sound practical experience and applied in the right way, it will do much to promote efficiency.

The Best Types

As beginners then, we have to think first of all of the initial outlay and the type of sheep best suited to our meagre knowledge and our local farming conditions and methods. We have learnt from reading that there are several different breeds, each breed possessing certain outstanding characteristics; also that there are so-called range and grade sheep of no particular breeding but simply the result of good sires having been used on common, strong, hardy ewes. A small range flock may not appeal to us because we feel that for all the difference in price, we might just as well have purebreds. One must remember though that the hardness of the western bred grade and range ewes makes them very suitable for the novice to try his skill upon. The purebred, as a rule is more tender, being in most instances an import and hence not yet accustomed to our rigorous climate. Having gained knowledge and some profit from the handling of the grade flock, it is an easy matter to launch into the purebred business in the course of three or four years.

Care in Buying

These grades may be obtained locally or from shipments brought into the different provinces from time to time by the Provincial Department of Agriculture, and when buying it is as well to remember

that shearlings or once shorn sheep will give the best paying results. They may possibly give a little more trouble at lambing time but this is offset by their longer period of usefulness and the fact that few of them are likely to be barren or spoiled. Older ewes will give the results too, of course, but if buying older ones, it is not wise to buy anything over three years and all such ewes should show a strong, full mouth of teeth. The over-confident beginner is an excellent mark for a salesman as he sees no need whatever of correcting any mistakes. Hence when buying your foundation ewes it may be as well to profess ignorance in the matter and in nine cases out of ten, the salesman will render assistance in choosing the most valuable animals. Always remember that any salesman has a certain reputation to sustain and if you place confidence in him he is going to live up to that reputation.

If at all possible, it is wise to purchase your foundation ewes, in lamb, thus postponing the purchase of a sire until you have derived the profit from your first crop of wool and lambs. In all cases the sire must be pure bred regardless of what constitutes the breeding of the ewes. If your ewes are purebred, purchase a sire of the same breeding and if in the first place you have purchased ewes of a breed suited to our climate, stay with that breed and by selection year after year and the use of typical rams, you will soon have a flock to be proud of. If your ewes are grade, purchase a ram that you feel sure will give you the desired results in your lamb and wool crop. The closer woolled breeds such as the Downs are possibly better suited to our colder western climate. The sire in every case, should possess the constitution, breed type, masculinity, conformation and uniformity that make him a real sire.

Unity Of Type

Having the foundation on both sides, the aim of every beginner should be unity of type within the flock. If this is adhered to from the outset, much better results will be obtained. If you have several different types running throughout the flock, you may find it extremely hard to select rams that will suit all these types. Furthermore, the man who can maintain a certain uniformity in all his breeding stock, so long as that uniformity conforms to the breed characters, establishes a reputation for so doing. His

strain gradually becomes known throughout the community and people begin to ask for it. This in itself is worth a great deal. Every novice must become familiar with the type he is working with and must be able to recognise at once any undesirable features about the mutton conformation or about the wool. All individuals not conforming to his ideals should be culled from the flock and not used for breeding purposes. They are serving a better purpose, if providing fresh mutton for the table. Always keep in mind the two points—mutton and wool, and be sure not to lose sight of the one in an endeavor to get too much of the other. And when selecting for wool, never keep a black sheep. It is just as menacing to your wool business as the "black sheep" in the human race is to society. Hence, practice selection not only in the initial foundation but in all subsequent breeding operations as well.

Results from Selection

Just in this connection it might be interesting to show what tangible results we are getting from judicious selection in our University flock at Saskatoon. The average price per pound of Saskatchewan's 1916 wool clip was 32.3 cents, i.e., the graded wool marketed co-operatively. Our own wool was $\frac{1}{2}$ way and grading into four of the main grades realised for us an average price of 36 cents a pound, an increase of 3.7 cents or a difference of \$40.81 on the 1103 pound clip. This increase is not the result of any better handling than the wool should get but is due largely to selection at breeding time. Certain farmers throughout Saskatchewan are getting just as pleasing results and no doubt some of them better, where selection is being practised.

One might enlarge upon this article by detailing winter and summer care, treatment at the breeding and lambing season, etc., but space will not permit. Suffice it to say that all such things will come to us gradually as we work with our sheep and apply some of the knowledge we get from other people and from books and farm journals. No man can farm intelligently today without reading intelligently of the methods followed by the other fellow and putting into practice these methods in so far as his own local conditions will permit. In the sheep business, as in any other business, the

eyes must be kept open and the mind ever on the alert to catch anything that is new.

BACON HOG—AN OPPORTUNITY

FROM 1904 to 1914 Canada's export trade with Britain in hog products decreased and Denmark's increased. From 1914 Canada's export bacon trade has increased and Denmark's has gone the other way, showing a falling off of 73,000,000 pounds. For the fiscal year ending March 31, 1914, Canada's export of hog products totalled 23,620,861 pounds; for 1915 the total was 72,036,025 pounds, and for 1916 144,150,309 pounds. The United States experienced a like increase. But so far as Canada is concerned, there is another side to the shield. On June 30, 1916, there were fewer hogs in this country than at any time during the previous ten years, and from 1911 to 1916 there was a decrease of one million. This serious state of affairs, as well as the opportunity that is before the country, is concisely and vividly pointed out in Pamphlet No. 21 of the Live Stock Department at Ottawa, entitled "The Bacon Hog and the British Market," for which Messrs. John Bright, Live Stock Commissioner, and H. S. Arkell, Assistant Commissioner, are jointly responsible. It is available for application to the Publications Branch, Department of Agriculture, Ottawa. Particularly unfortunate, says the pamphlet, is the decrease in the face of the rare opportunity that is offered us to further extend our "Wiltshire side" trade with the British market, a trade that for the year 1915 amounted in value to \$15,957,652. In view of the facts here set forth it is hardly necessary to further refer to the gravity of the situation or to the opportunity that will be lost if our farmers and breeders do not bestir themselves. The joint authors point out that while we are not for specified reasons to occupy the market for fat hogs, that for the bacon hog is ours for the asking. They also call for regularity in the supply. "We cannot," they say, "go into the business for six months in the year and then go out of it for six months without having a general average of price that is both unprofitable, both to producer and packer." A good crop of hogs is required each month of the year. "If each farmer," the pamphlet says in conclusion, "maintains even one or, at most, two sows and manages these and their offsprings properly, there can be built up in Canada a very important and remunerative industry, not only yielding a permanent profit to the farmer, but as well materially assisting in preserving the commercial stability of the Dominion."

"ON THE JOB"

In Montana, says *Harper's Magazine*, a railway bridge had been destroyed by fire, and it was necessary to replace it. Two days later came the superintendent of the division. Alighting from his private car, he encountered the old master bridge builder.

"Bill," said the superintendent,—"and the words quivered with energy—"I want this job rushed. Every hour's delay costs the company money. Have you the engineer's plans for the new bridge?" "I don't know," said the bridge builder, "whether the engineer has his picture drawn yet, but the bridge is up and the trains is passin' over it."

STOP THE DRAFTS

Fresh air is a splendid tonic for man and beast, but it must be supplied in the proper way or trouble is quite apt to result. Poultry do their best when liberally supplied with fresh air, even during the cold winter months. The ideal ventilation is plenty of fresh air without direct drafts, and this can be secured in the modern open-front poultry house. Fowls roosting in the open will be less apt to take cold than will those that are forced to spend the night in a drafty pen. Guard against currents of air by stopping all cracks and openings except those intended for supplying fresh air.

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