

Stock Department.

Sheltered and Unsheltered Stock.

The care of animals during the winter season is a most important part of rural economy. More depends upon it than superficial thinkers are apt to suppose. It is pretty well understood now, at any rate by all farmers who are sufficiently enlightened to take an agricultural paper, that there is no farm management worthy the name that does not include manure-making as a prominent object. Without manure, land must run down as crops are successively taken off it. But if manure is to be saved, stock must be housed and fed in such a manner as to facilitate this important process. This is one way of looking at the subject of shelter.

Another view of it points at once to economy of food and the improvement of the manure. Animals exposed to the blasts of winter will be lean and skinny on an amount of food that would keep them comfortable if they were properly housed. Nor is it good policy to stint a sheltered animal, since the droppings of "lean kine" are of poor quality, and make a far less valuable fertilizer than those of well-kept creatures.

Again, an animal that has a hard time of it in getting through the winter, and comes out of it like a soldier who has been through a harassing campaign,

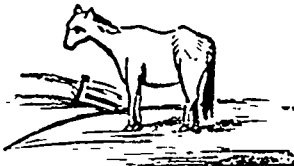


FIG. 2.—Storm-fed Calf.

requires considerable time to recruit so as to be good for anything the following season. Unsheltered and half-starved oxen are not fit to do any spring work; it will be midsummer before they are in decent condition. Cows thus neglected do not recover their vigour so as to be profitable until the season is half over. In many cases constitutional injury is done by exposure and starvation, such as is never wholly repaired.

These and similar considerations appeal to the farmer's pecuniary interest, which is far better served by taking care of live stock, than by treating them with neglect. There is, however, a higher view of the subject—that based on considerations of humanity. Man owes a duty to those lower tribes that, while they serve him, are dependent on him. It is a sin and a shame to doom innocent, unoffending, faithful creatures to months of discomfort and suffering. Questions of profit and loss entirely left out of view, we are under obligations to care for the comfort and happiness of the inferior animals to whom we stand in the relation of "Lords of creation."

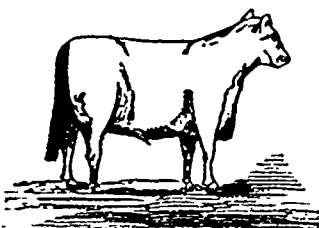


FIG. 3.—Stable-fed Calf

While there is pleasing evidence of improvement in this respect, it is still to be regretted that many farmers have yet to learn the first principles of right winter stock management. It is no rare or strange thing to behold scenes like that depicted in the ac-

companying engraving (fig. 1), which, together with the other cuts on this page, we copy from a recent number of the *Country Gentleman*. To their shame be it spoken, there are not a few Canadian farmers who are in the habit of wintering their stock in the open fields, and feeding them from stacks in the way the annexed picture represents. Thus exposed, animals consume far more food than they would do under cover, and yet never look hearty and comfortable.



FIG. 1.—Wintering Stock in the Open Fields.

It has been estimated that fully one-third of the food consumed under such circumstances, goes to restore the animal warmth abstracted by keen frosts, and swept away by cold winds. The extra food thus thrown away would soon amount to the cost of comfortable sheds and stalls. No contrast could be more complete and striking than that presented by the sleek, comfortable appearance of the well-housed and well-fed stock kept by the thrifty farmer, and the skinny, drawn-up, wretched-looking animals owned by the negligent and slipshod farmer. Picking out one of the best specimens from the former, and one of the worst specimens from the latter, the yearling cattle of the two classes of managers will present an appearance very like that shown in figs. 2 and 3, in which we have represented a storm-fed, and a sta-



FIG. 6.—Evergreen Screen.

ble-fed calf." Of course, shelter alone will not account for the difference. There must be abundant and regular feeding, cleanliness and care, along with the housing. Insufficient and irregular feeding, dirt, and want of attention will tell very unfavourably even on animals that are privileged with shelter. In fact, the winter care of stock is a business, and to succeed well it must have constant and thorough attention. For this it will pay in a double sense. The farmer's profits will be increased, and there will be a satisfaction and pleasure, instead of mortification and disgust, in surveying the flocks and herds. The *Country Gentleman*, in referring to the style of mismanagement once so common, remarks: "The feeling of many farmers for their cattle on entering winter and emerging from it, was like that of a general on taking his men into battle and coming out

of the conflict—he expected to lose many of his men as an unavoidable calamity. We can remember when it was common, in the same way, for farmers to compare notes by counting losses in their flocks of sheep in spring. Cattle sometimes, but not often, died in wintering. The more common calamity was the loss of flesh; and the degree of success or failure, was sometimes measured by the distance at which an animal's ribs could be counted when viewed across the field." Our contemporary adds: "We are glad to be able to say that such burlesque management has become quite rare. There is, however, still too much of it, and it is greatly to be wished that those who practise it could be effectually argued or shamed out of their folly."

Among all the tenants of the barn yard none suffer so severely from exposure and neglect as sheep, and none pay better for care in wintering than they do. Storm-fed flocks often contain specimens of which fig. 4 is no caricature. Unsheltered sheep generally come out of winter with their numbers more or less thinned by exposure, and their owners always calculate on loss from a cause which need not operate if proper means are adopted. Fig. 5 shows the appearance of the housed and well cared for animal. The journal above quoted remarks that "sheep owners have long since discovered that the loss from exposure in life, in flesh, in quantity and quality of wool, will pay for comfortable, permanent sheep sheds every two years."



FIG. 4.—Unhoused Sheep

It is not as though large outlay were required to house stock. Of course, expensive, ornamental buildings can be put up for this purpose. But very simple and cheap ones will do. A few posts and boards will make the sides, and a few poles covered with straw the roof of sheds in which animals may pass the winter very comfortably. The backwoods farmer can, with no outlay, and very little sacrifice of time and labour, make his creatures comfortable. Log walls and slab roofs answer an excellent purpose. Even now, in mid-winter, the backwoodsman who has no shelter for his little out-door family would do well to provide house and home for them. It is no great job to scrape out the snow from an area sufficiently large for the purpose. The cedar or black ash swamp will bear now, and the logs will glide beautifully over the snow and frozen ground. There



FIG. 5.—Housed Sheep.

is usually leisure in the winter season, and how could it be better improved than by making the stock comfortable?