



# The Western Wool Crop

*How the Prairie Provinces are Grading and Selling the 1917 Clip*

By R. D. Colquette

The machinery provided for the grading and marketing of the western wool crop is working well this year. In Alberta, wool graders operating under the direction of the Dominion livestock branch and sheep breeders' associations of the province are finishing up their heaviest season's work. It is expected that the total amount graded will exceed 2,000,000 pounds, of which over 1,000,000 pounds was graded for the South Alberta Wool Growers' Association alone. In Saskatchewan 220,000 pounds has been handled by the co-operative organization branch of the department of agriculture. This compares with 69,000 pounds in 1914, when the work was organized and with 179,890 pounds last year. In Manitoba the department of agriculture has handled fully 200,000 pounds, an increase of 10,000 pounds over last year's figures and fully three times the amount handled in 1915. So far, but little of this year's clip has been sold. The various selling agencies have had the experience of two or more years in selling on grade and in large quantities and with wool at the prices now prevailing are not pressing their product upon the market. Their business is to safeguard the interests of the grower and sales will not be consummated until the big buyers on both sides of the line have had a chance to compete in bidding for the wool and show a disposition to offer competitive prices.

## Saskatchewan's Experiment

A new experiment is being tried out in handling the wool of Saskatchewan. It has excellent prospects of success. For the last three years the wool consigned to the department for grading and sell-

ing has been offered in the local warehouse at Regina. The experience gained has disclosed some interesting features. Each year the wool was offered to both Canadian and American firms on both sides of the line. About three times as many Canadian as American firms were asked for bids but in the three years the department received only three bids from Canadian firms and in each case they were outbid by American firms from two to three cents. This year therefore it was decided to ship the wool to the United States and to have it graded there according to American standards and offered on the American market. But there were many other considerations influencing the department in making this experiment. In the great wool centres across the line the big manufacturers, as well as the dealers bid for the wool. The quantity of wool handled is such that it can be graded, stored, insured and sold for one and one-half cents a pound. The New England States is the centre of the wool manufacturing trade on this continent and is therefore the natural market for the wool. Boston and Philadelphia are the recognized wool marketing centres in America for both the import and domestic wool trade. The difficulty of getting Saskatchewan wool upon this market was not great as there are always a number of American cars available in which to make the shipments. There was therefore a strong case in favor of shipping Saskatchewan wool to that market. Arrangements were accordingly made by W. W. Thomson, who has charge of the work, with the National Wool Warehouse and Storage Company, with head offices at Chicago, to have the wool which was forwarded to the department placed on the market with the American clip and sold under the same grades. This company was formed some nine years ago. It is the result of a movement started among the American wool growers, who recognized that the market for their product was not on a satisfactory basis. It is largely co-operative in character, and has done considerable educational work in getting the American grower to produce a better grade of wool. It now has storehouses at Chicago, Boston and Philadelphia, and it is to the Philadelphia storehouse that the Saskatchewan wool has been consigned. There it will be graded and sold along with the American output.

## How The Wool Was Handled

Let us trace a consignment of wool from the time it leaves the farmer's hands until it is finally graded and disposed of at Philadelphia. It is assumed, of course, that the farmer has taken advantage of the department's offer to supply sacks and paper twine for his convenience in shipping the wool. The sacks

hold from 200 to 250 pounds of wool and were supplied at cost, varying from 75 cents to \$1.10, according to the time at which they were purchased. After the fleeces are folded according to the directions given by the department, they are packed tightly into the sacks for shipment to Regina. If the farmer has not enough wool to fill a sack, he may co-operate with his neighbor, being careful to separate the two consignments in the sack so that there will be no difficulty in identifying each man's wool. The sacks are then shipped by freight to the department at Regina, which has provided warehouse facilities for the re-shipment of the wool. Upon its arrival in Regina the wool from various sources is collected in the warehouse, and as soon as a railroad has been received a car is secured and loaded. Owing to the possibility of a war tax of 10 per cent being placed on all imports, it was necessary this year to rush the cars across the border as rapidly as they could be filled. Before being transferred to the car, the labels are removed and the sack given a number, which together with the letter "B," representing Saskatchewan, is stencilled on the outside of the sack, as shown in the illustration. A careful record of this number is kept as it becomes the means by which the sack is identified as being shipped by a particular owner. Upon the wool's arrival in Philadelphia it is stored in the warehouses of the National Wool Warehouse and Storage Company and in due time is graded according to American standards. The grading this year is being watched carefully.

by Prof. W. H. J. Tisdale, of the Animal Husbandry department of the agricultural college at Saskatoon. Prof. Tisdale has been supplied to the department and is taking this opportunity of familiarizing himself with the American grading system, and is also safeguarding the interests of the Saskatchewan shipper. He makes notes on all the grade certificates, making suggestions to the consignor as to any improvements that could be made in his method of handling the wool.



Saskatchewan Wool Consigned to the Philadelphia Market

Each Shipment's Identity Preserved

A shipment does not lose its identity until after it is graded. The grade certificate shows the amount of each shipment falling into each grade, and when the wool is finally disposed of each shipper's share of the proceeds will be distributed according to the grade certificate. When the grading is completed, or at any time thereafter, the American firm takes tenders or bids for the Saskatchewan product and submits these to the department at Regina, which has the final word to say in closing the bargain. The plan is to sell the wool as soon as it is graded, and the wool shippers are being kept informed as to the progress that is being made in disposing of their product. Altogether about 500 consignments totalling about 220,000 pounds and comprising nine carloads, were received and shipped to Philadelphia this year.

Upon the receipt of the wool at Regina, an advance of 20 cents a pound was made. This, it was at first thought, would be sufficient until the wool was finally disposed of. Upon its decision to send the wool to the American market, however, the department arranged to make a further advance of 10 cents per pound on account of the extra delay occasioned, to any of the patrons in need of funds. The high price secured for wool this year makes such a large advance a comparatively safe one. The scheme is financed from an appropriation made by the Saskatchewan government for the advancement of agricultural interests. The cost to the producer for freight and handling amounts to about three cents a pound.

Two difficulties were experienced by the department this year in ensuring that each owner's consignment would not lose its identity. The first was occasioned by the wrong use of labels. Two labels were supplied for each sack, one to go on the outside and the other on the inside to be used for identification purposes in case the other was lost. Some shippers attached both labels to the outside of the sack. The second difficulty was owing to too much co-operation. In some cases

Continued on Page 10



Grading this year's clip for the Alberta Sheep Breeders' Association at Calgary

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A Small Part of Alberta's Wool Output Piled Ready for Grading. The Graders' Graders Getting Things in Readiness for Handling the Wool.