

LIVE STOCK.

MANAGING AUCTION SALES.

While, as a rule, the most satisfactory sales of stock are made by judicious advertising and private contract, there are times and circumstances in which an auction sale appears necessary and advisable, as in the case of a breeder retiring from the business, of the disposition of an estate, or of a farm being much overstocked for the feed on hand or available.

Having decided on holding an auction sale, the question of the best time and place for the sale to be chosen arises, and, while this may depend largely upon circumstances and conditions, experience and observation point to the late fall and early spring months as, on the whole, the most suitable for a successful sale. In the early autumn months, in most districts, fairs are fixed for nearly every week, and for nearly every day in each week; wheat-seeding, silage and root storing, and fall plowing, occupy the time and attention of farmers, and it is difficult to secure a large attendance. In the winter time, there is the liability of storms and blocked railways and roads to contend with, besides the greater danger to the health of animals shipped in cold weather, after being kept in warm stables. In the late fall, farmers know their feed supply, and those whose barns are full may see their way to put in more stock to advantage. In the early spring, cattle, where well cared for, generally look their best in flesh and hair, and may be shipped with greater comfort and safety.

June would appear to be the model month for a sale, yet we have seldom seen a successful vendue in that month, and many partial or complete failures. In the early fall months pastures are often short and flies abundant, and the hair of cattle dry and staring, making them look their worst. If making a choice of months for a sale, our preference would be, first, March or April; second, November or December. As to place, we should say, first, at home; second, at a central stock-yard, where comfortable stabling is available. In no other place do stock look so well as in their own stables, and, if arranged with a view to uniformity of size and age, without too much disturbance, they show to best advantage. Animals taken from comfortable stables, shipped a considerable distance, placed in strange surroundings, and with a change of food, are liable to shrink seriously and lose much of their bloom. Holding a sale at and during a fair or exhibition would appear to be a wise arrangement, the people being on hand and having the opportunity to kill two birds with one stone, yet we fail to recall more than a brace of successful sales at a show, and have seen many failures at such times. Combination sales, where contributions from many herds are offered at one time and place, have proved a distinct failure in this country, though tried repeatedly, and bonused and backed with Government and society grants. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, sales liberally advertised and held at home are the most successful and satisfactory to all concerned.

The success of a sale, we need hardly state, depends very largely on the condition in which the stock is offered. It pays well to present them in good flesh and well groomed, trained to lead by the halter and to show to advantage. A wild or unmanageable animal greatly hinders a sale. In the case of pure-bred stock, a catalogue of the pedigrees, prepared early, and mailed to applicants, is almost indispensable to a successful sale. This need not be expensively gotten up, but it is well worth while to have it neatly printed, and correct in every particular, the corresponding numbers being pasted on or attached to the animals. A sale-ring, not too large nor too small, should be provided. With a very large ring, the salesman finds difficulty in catching the bids; he likes to look his bidders in the face, and keep track of them. With too small a ring, intending buyers fail to see the animals satisfactorily; they like to see them move. Sufficient help should be provided, in order that no delay occurs in bringing out the animals; one should invariably be ready at the entrance to the ring, to be marched in the moment the one in the enclosure is declared sold. Duplicate lists of the animals in the order they will be sold, one for the attendants, the other posted in the stable, should be prepared. It is generally considered best to sell the animals in the order in which they are likely to bring the most money—which they are likely to bring so—for the reason that is, the best first, or nearly so—for the reason that buyers will wait for the desirable numbers, and if they fail to secure those, they may take the next or a later number, the price more nearly meeting their views. The less interference with the sale by the owner, except to make necessary explanations, the better. Except in an extreme case of too low bidding, it is a mistake to withdraw an animal on which two bids have been

made, as it will generally be found that, while some go at less than their value in the estimation of the seller, others go beyond his expectation, and the average is fairly satisfactory. Almost invariably a withdrawal, or the suspicion that by-bidding is being practiced, puts a damper on the sale, and detracts from its success. Except in an extreme case of failure to attract a satisfactory attendance, it is a mistake to postpone a sale. We have seen many instances where the crowd present seemed to promise a partial failure, but the result was beyond expectations, and fairly satisfactory. The securing of a good crowd depends largely on the skill and liberality displayed in advertising. The experience of those who have used it judiciously is that printer's ink pays a good profit on its cost.

In the case of a sale of common or grade stock, a competent local auctioneer who knows the people, and whom the people know, will, as a rule, get as good prices, and perhaps better than a stranger; but, for pedigreed stock, it will, in most cases, pay well to engage a clever salesman, who knows the class of stock he is to sell and its value, and is acquainted with a considerable proportion of the breeders, though the terms for his services may be considerably higher.

MANAGEMENT OF A FLOCK.

In the course of a paper, read by Mr. A. Mansell, of Shrewsbury, before the International Conference of Sheep-breeders, he said: In a pedigree flock, a regular system of drafting at a certain age is not so easy as in a commercial flock, but it is important that the breeder should try and draft upon a plan which keeps the flock from de-

the first instance, before shearing, when one has a better opportunity of judging of the quality, evenness, and staple of the fleece; and then, finally, the selected ones should be carefully examined a month or so after shearing, when, probably, some which had a pleasing appearance, and looked well-developed, may strip somewhat ugly in feature, and prove leggy and shallow.

The breeder should spare no trouble in the selection of ewes to add to the flock; and the ultimate choice should receive confirmation by repeated observations, guided to a certain extent by the individual breeding in each case. Even with all the care, thought and knowledge the breeder possesses of his own flock, he will, without a doubt, make several mistakes; hence the great importance of adopting any and every means to ensure a right selection. On no account should the breeder be tempted to sell his best ewes. It is tantamount to selling the hen that lays the golden egg.

In preparing to show sheep, in the late autumn, or certainly not later than the turn of the year, some ten to twelve ram lambs, and about the same number of ewe lambs (if it is intended to show ewes), should be selected, with a view to giving them a little more care and attention than the rest for exhibition purposes.

In the first place, we would recommend that double the required number be drawn out, the lambs from the ewes which have recently bred exceptionally well being specially noted. After this, they must all undergo a careful scrutiny, and all that have defects which would bar their winning must be discarded at once, as it would only be time and trouble thrown away to prepare and feed for show an animal that could not be successful. What is a defect that cannot be passed over in a show-ring, must be left to the judgment of the breeder; but it is quite clear to any observant person that many breeders never exhibit their best sheep. They either do not take the care in selecting that they should do, or—what, perhaps, is very probable—they delegate the same to the steward or shepherd.

The young sheep intended for exhibition should be developed by every reasonable means, but one of the difficulties to be overcome is to impress upon the shepherd the fact that sheep grow and thrive better upon plenty of green food and good clover hay, with a moderate allowance of grain. All young or inexperienced shepherds make the great mistake of feeding grain too freely, and the watchful eye of the master should be ever on the alert to counteract the tendency of the shepherd to use artificial too freely. The most successful



Halstead Royal Duke.

Shire stallion, two years old. First in class and champion, Royal Show, 1908. Sire Locking Forest King.

generating into a lot of old ewes; for, should a dispersion, from some cause or other, be necessary, a young stock will be sure to realize good prices, as compared with one which has lost its bloom, no matter how good the previous record of these aged ewes may have been.

As to the number of ewes which should be drafted annually, one must be guided by circumstances. Should the young ewes be exceptionally good, and by one or more sires which you have a good opinion of, it will be politic to draft from the breeding flock more largely than usual. If, on the other hand, the shearing ewes are not to your liking, it may be well to add none to the breeding flock, and dispose of the young ewes in their entirety, when they usually sell exceptionally well. With care in drafting out the weak ewes yearly, and by using a ram of the right stamp, a flock may, without any other means being taken, be greatly increased in value at a moderate cost.

The selection of the shearing ewes to add to the flock is a matter of great importance, and every breeder who is wise will not fail to give it his personal attention. To begin with, we would recommend that the selection should be made, in

breeders of show sheep are invariably, warm advocates for a variety of green food in winter and summer, using, comparatively speaking, little else.

In most cases, as the spring advances, the show sheep are housed, but with many breeds it is only partially so, the sheep having a small paddock to roam in, with access to a shed at will. If the sheep are to be housed, a thatched building, with a wooden sparred floor, is recommended as being cool and easily kept clean.

Exercise is, however, essential, even after the sheep have been shorn and housed, and the shepherd should be made to understand that the chances of success are greater if the sheep have gentle exercise daily. It develops muscles and strength, keeps them well on their legs, gives them an increased appetite, and promotes health.

The remainder of the rams are best treated as field sheep, as they grow bigger and stronger, develop more muscle and flesh, and are more likely to prove stock-getters. They should have as much variety of food as the farm affords, and in the heat of the summer it is wise to give them access to a shed, or some other adequate protection from the sun's rays.