

Need Twenty Million Sheep.

THE SHEEP COMMISSION'S REPORT.

In Great Britain, with its comparatively insignificant area, there are 31,852,777 sheep; in New Zealand, 23,792,947; in Australia, 92,241,226 sheep of shearing age; in Argentina, 67,211,754; in United States, 51,216,000, including lambs; while in Canada there are but 2,106,000 head." This statement of fact appears at the outset of the eagerly-expected report upon the sheep industry in Canada, Great Britain and the United States, and largely denotes the situation which led to the appointment, in July, 1910, of W. A. Dryden and W. T. Ritch as a special commission to investigate the conditions affecting sheep-raising in this and other countries. Their report is now out, and a copy may be had by any interested party upon application to the Live-Stock Commissioner, Department of Agriculture, Ottawa. Perusal of this report convinces us readily that it is by far the most exhaustive treatise which has yet appeared in Canada relative to sheep husbandry. An immense amount of valuable information has been presented, the field of investigation having been covered with extraordinary thoroughness. As might be expected, the commission found immense scope for extension. Weedy lands, waste lands, hilly lands, level lands all need sheep. "We should not remain satisfied," they say, "until statistics show a return of at least ten times the number of sheep, as given by the present estimate, and until sheep-raising has established itself as a recognized factor in promoting the national prosperity."

Without attempting to synopsise this extensive compendium, which every farmer should read for himself, we may pick out a significant sentence here and there:

"The popularity of Prince Edward Island lamb and mutton must not be attributed to care in breeding operations or to a selection of rams for mating purposes, but rather to the outstanding quality of the natural grasses. From 1901 to 1910 the number of sheep in the Province decreased from 125,546 to 75,600, while prices largely increased.

Nova Scotia has much rough, partly-timbered land, comprising many abandoned, worn-out farms, which, however, still grow an abundance of short, sweet grass, mixed with clover, very suitable for sheep-raising.

During late summer and early fall, large numbers of lambs and sheep are shipped out of the Maritime Provinces, and, in turn, during the succeeding winter, heavy shipments of frozen meat are brought in to supply the local demand in such centers as Sydney, Halifax, St. John and Fredericton. The practice of winter feeding should bear considerable expansion, especially in those districts where hay is now sold off the farm and other feeds produced in abundance.

On some of the bleak lands of the South Shore of Nova Scotia, and more especially on some of the numerous small islands, sheep are found in a wild or semi-wild state, procuring as food fresh kelp and other kinds of seaweed during the winter, with the addition of scanty withered grass during the summer. That sheep will thrive under such rough conditions, is considered proof that, by the aid of some judgment and care, a profitable industry could be developed in such districts with but little expense.

Sheep grazing on land infested with ragwort, the weed which, when eaten by cattle in a dry state, causes Pictou Cattle Disease, go far to subdue this troublesome pest, with no harm to themselves. Ragwort, we read, has already spread over half the Province.

Dogs, fencing, dairying, and insufficient help, are quite generally assigned in Eastern Canada as reasons for not keeping sheep. Many excellent dog-laws are slackly enforced. To this is added, particularly in Ontario, complaints of low wool prices.

Ontario's pure-bred sheep business owes its foundation to the American trade, which is hard to handle, and liable at any time to cease. Quarantine regulations, customs laws, and the erratic demands of live-stock associations in foreign countries, make expansion of trade a doubtful speculation. The home trade is more important than many breeders realize, and, with an educational campaign, would quickly assume an importance worthy of special consideration.

A branch of sheep-raising that proves to be very lucrative in districts adjacent to large cities is the production of early fat lambs for high-class retail trade. In Toronto and Montreal, quite an important business of this nature has sprung up during the past few years. Young lambs command as high as \$10 during winter and early spring. Dorset ewes are especially valuable to breed this class of lambs.

In the matter of castration, much complaint has been voiced by the best buyers in the large markets. At some seasons a difference of 50 cents is paid in favor of wethers, and an agitation to increase this to \$1.00 is under way.

DOGS.

The losses from dogs have been very serious for a number of years, and many farmers have been driven out of the sheep business from this cause alone. Ontario has possibly the most effective dog law in the Dominion, and, while it compensates for actual losses, it does not provide sufficient protection for breeders, who consider this



W. A. Dryden.

Member of the Canadian Commission on the Sheep Industry.

annoyance the most serious hindrance to increased flocks. When worried by dogs a few times in one season, with a few sheep killed and more injured, the flock is left in such shape that it can be of very little use for a long time afterwards. For this reason, many former breeders of sheep have disposed of their entire flocks, while others who would like to maintain a few as a side line,



W. T. Ritch.

Member of the Canadian Commission on the Sheep Industry.

hesitate to do so on account of the sad experience of their neighbors. Dogs of a destructive character are allowed privileges and enjoy freedom not permitted to any other animal, and why this is so is a little hard to understand. Any horse or bull doing a like damage in one night would be sufficient cause for the law to take action at once, and not only would any judge award damages in such cases, but he would also give special

injunctions that the owner should take care in future that his horse or bull was tied securely. About a year ago, the outbreak of rabies, and the subsequent action of the Federal Government in issuing a muzzling order, led to the much more strict enforcement of the Ontario dog law, and with very beneficial results. The commissioners feel certain, therefore, that, with the general use of woven fencing, and a more rigorous enforcement of the dog law, sheep-worrying would almost disappear, and the confidence of the farmer would be restored by this double security.

MARKET SITUATION IN CANADA AND UNITED STATES.

Eastern Canada, including Ontario, Quebec and the Maritime Provinces, has produced in the past more sheep than were consumed locally, and exported annually some thousands of head. While there has been very little variation in the numbers produced in the country, the exports of sheep have continually declined, from 67,701 in 1908, to 5,584 in 1910. In 1907, the United States bought from us to the extent of 130,817 head. For three months in 1911 we bought from them 14,276 head. At the time Canada began to consume all her own mutton product, United States prices began to drop, owing to peculiar and temporary circumstances. The range country of the Western United States is the principal factor in the production of American mutton. The summer of 1909 was very dry, and a scarcity of feed on the range did not leave the sheep in good rugged condition to endure the very hard succeeding winter. Losses amounted to millions of dollars, and sheepmen were much discouraged. However, they had faith in the future, and struggled along through another bad summer in 1910, only to find in the fall that money was hard to get, and, not being permitted the use of more capital, they were unable to store up a supply of feed for winter keep. Faced with the general policy of retrenchment recently adopted by the banks of the West, and also by the fact that his notes were now falling due, there was no alternative for the sheepman but to cash in. The result was that, in the fall of 1910, and well on into the winter, Western sheep flooded the markets of the United States to such an extent that, for a time, killers hardly knew how to handle them. This had the effect of demoralizing prices in a very marked way, so that, with the increased demand in Canada, it was possible to ship to this country to the extent above mentioned.

With the rapid influx of settlers, general cutting down of range stock in the Western country has been going on for a number of years, and, with such enormous abnormal reductions, the American source of supply must be shrinking materially, and, with liquidation ceased, the American people must awaken to an amazing shortage in their stock of mutton."

WOOL.

Upon our methods of handling and marketing wool, the Commissioners are very outspoken, as read this: "From shearing to marketing, no country in the world handles its wool in a worse manner than Canada. As far as the wool of mutton breeds and cross-breeds go, we do not know of any country where it is handled in such an unsatisfactory way, and delivered in such bad condition." The pointed suggestions on this score we must leave for later quotation. Suffice to say that our practice is criticised on the following points: Dirty fleeces, lack of light in pens, cobwebs in sheep barns, rough-board walls, lack of sufficient attention to dipping, slovenly shearing, tying of fleeces, and storing of wool; and the need of some organized system of assembling and marketing. The tub-washing in vogue in the Maritime Provinces and Quebec is severely criticised.

In discussing the American sheep industry, encouraging reference is made to a co-operative enterprise called the National Wool Warehouse and Storage Company, of Chicago, Boston and Philadelphia, with which "Farmer's Advocate" readers are already familiar in a general way.

Without going further into details concerning this splendid and handsomely illustrated report, we subjoin the recommendations, which, by the way, seem the least specific part of the report.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

The recommendations with which the commissioners conclude their report we have thus epitomized. They suggest, first of all, the appointment to the Live-Stock Branch of two specially-qualified officers to represent, respectively, the sheep and wool industries, and following this, an extensive campaign of education. Their other suggestions follow:

1. The general adoption of improved scientific methods in breeding sheep. Maintaining a single breed in each locality is recommended as worth considering.

2. Definite systems of farm management in relation to sheep husbandry should be advocated. Advantages of special pasture crops should be pointed out, and the danger arising from infested pastures made clear.