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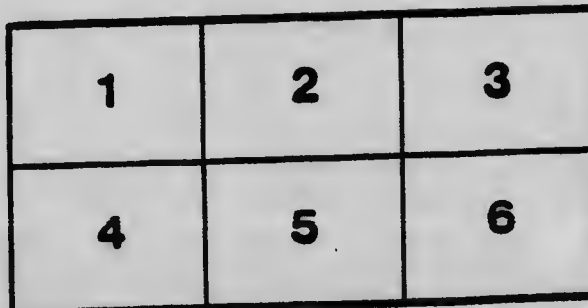
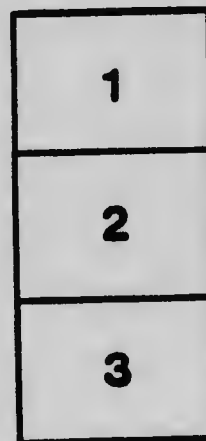
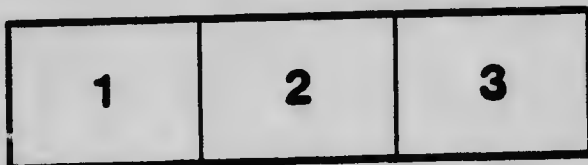
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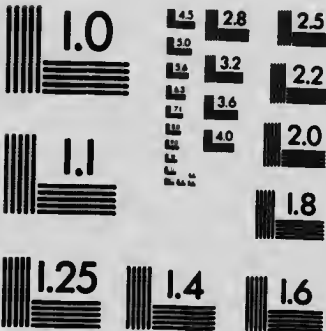
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# THE GREAT NEGLECT IN SHEEP HUSBANDRY

FAILURE TO CASTRATE RAM LAMBS INTENDED  
FOR SLAUGHTER

NOV 4 1901

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## ADVANTAGES OF DOCKING



Cross-bred rearing wethers.

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DOMINION DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
LIVE STOCK BRANCH  
PAMPHLET No. 9  
SHEEP AND GOAT DIVISION

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DOMINION DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

LIVE STOCK BRANCH.

JOHN BRIGHT,  
Commissioner.

H. S. ARKELL,  
Asst. Commissioner.

**SHEEP AND GOAT DIVISION.**

THE MANAGEMENT OF SMALL FLOCKS SERIES.

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*January, 1915.*

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## CASTRATION AND DOCKING.

BY

T. REG. ARKELL and NORMAN STANSFIELD.

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One prominent writer on agricultural topics has characterized the failure to castrate male lambs as "the great neglect" in sheep husbandry. There is no doubt that this negligence has been a decided drawback to the progress of the sheep industry in Canada. Farmers who are engaged in raising horses do not for one moment contemplate leaving all male offspring entire. Nor do cattlemen forget to castrate bull calves, unless they are intended for breeding purposes. Hog raisers have realized that it is necessary to unsex their grade boars and some even deprive the females of their ovaries, in order to insure the best gains in weight. There is no justifiable reason why sheep raisers should be so careless in this regard. Nevertheless, cold facts demonstrate that, unfortunately, emasculation of grade rams is not practised to the extent it should be. Why castration should be neglected in this class of live stock is difficult to understand. Probably the greater docility of the ram compared with the bull or stallion may afford an explanation. The ram will not break down fences as will the stallion, nor gore attendants to death as the bull. Dire calamities always impress people. It should not be necessary, however, for deaths to occur before warnings are heeded. Fortunately for mankind, rams are not so ferocious as bulls. If they were, imagine the continual danger which would be the result of the number of entire rams which are to be found in every district where sheep are raised.

Docking is also neglected to fully as great a degree as castration. Both sexes should be docked. The main argument against the docking of horses is that the natural means of fly protection is destroyed. In the case of sheep, this argument cannot be raised, because the tail is so heavy as to prevent switching and, moreover,

the heavy covering of wool, which the flies cannot penetrate, makes it unnecessary. On the other hand, the presence of a tail induces the collection of manure, in which maggots may develop.

#### REASONS FOR CASTRATION.

1. Unsexed lambs are more easily cared for than rams in the field, since they are not so restless and, consequently, do not require as strong fences.

2. Wethers grow and fatten more quickly than rams. Lambs for the full market are disposed of shortly after weaning and should be in good condition at that time. Where emasculation has been neglected they may, however, not be fit for the shambles. At about three or four months old the lamb realizes his masculinity and proceeds to



Castrating lambs by means of the emasculator.

worry the females in his company and, when separated from them, the males will jump upon one another, paying very little attention to feeding. These lambs should be fattening, but reality shows that the reverse is the case and what is known as the baby fat is lost. A check in growth takes place and it is impossible to hasten the fattening process or obtain the desired state of bloom, unless heavy grain feeding is practised. This means a financial loss either owing to the greater amount of grain which must be fed or to the reduction in price which results from an unfinished condition. Experiment has shown that wethers make 11 per cent more gains in weight under similar conditions than do ram lambs. The negligent sheep raiser does, therefore, pay a severe penalty.

3. Drovers will not pay as much for ram lambs as for wethers. Some markets will accept rams only at a reduced price. The reduction made in this respect by the Live Stock Exchange of Toronto is seventy-five cents per head upon all males not castrated.



4. Unsterilized lambs may get into the ewe flock. Sometimes mating takes place, which may be undesirable and productive of heavy financial losses.

5. Castration of males intended for the butcher is a very apparent sign of good shepherding and lambs from a well-managed flock find a ready market, even in times of a temporary market depression.

6. Winter feeding for mutton purposes can be undertaken more successfully with wethers than with rams.

#### METHODS OF CASTRATION.

Liability to injury or death is the lame excuse which some men put forward when asked why they do not sterilize their male lambs. There is very little risk,



Severing the scrotum and testicles near the body with the emasculator.

however, if the operation is performed at the proper time and attention is paid to the maintenance of sanitary conditions. Castration can best be performed when the lamb is about ten days or two weeks old. At this time a minimum amount of pain is caused. Aged rams, even five or six years old, may be deprived of their testicles with safety, if the operation is performed in a careful manner. An effective disinfectant should be used in all cases. The hands and knife should be sterilized

and a little antiseptic placed on the wound, thereby preventing the possibility of infection. Clean pens with repeated renewals of fresh straw are required. If castration takes place when blow-flies are abundant, precautions should be taken to prevent their interference with the wound. This may be done with disinfectant or a little covering of tar. Many shepherds always smear the opening of the scrotum with an ointment of lard and turpentine mixed to the consistency of a soft paste. Any method which will prohibit the ravages of the fly and hasten healing is sufficient.



Cutting off the lower end of the scrotum with a knife.

One of the most common and undoubtedly the oldest form of castration is where one-third of the scrotum is cut off and the testicles drawn out by the teeth of the operator. In this way the operation is performed quickly. Some object to this method, because they deem it filthy, yet many of them undoubtedly relish "lamb's fry." There may be, on the other hand, some grounds for objection through the entrance from the mouth of bacteria into the wound. Removal of the testicles may be effected by drawing them with the finger and thumb, but there is more danger of bursting the testicle in this procedure than where the removal is made with the teeth. A small pair of pincers can also be used for this purpose. It is better to draw out the spermatic cord which is attached to the testicle rather than cut it with a knife.

In castrating old rams, the entire scrotum and its contents are removed by severing it near the body. Hot pincers which sear the severed arteries and thus prevent bleeding are used in such cases. There are some who use this method in castrating lambs. An instrument especially designated for sterilizing, known as an emasculator, is employed for this purpose. In using it, the testicles are pressed upward and the lower portion of the scrotum cut off. The cords in this operation are completely severed. Swelling may follow but may be reduced by bathing with a warm disinfecting solution.

Show wethers should have a full "purse" or scrotum. If the entrance is made from the side the size of the scrotum is not diminished. Care must be taken that the opening is near the lower end so as to provide good drainage and prevent the



Method of docking lambs with pincers.

collection of pus. The testicles are removed by the use of emasculators which cut through the spermatic cord.

#### REASONS FOR DOCKING.

Manure collects on a long tail very readily and may become a prolific breeding place for maggots. In small lambs whose digestive tracts are unsettled manure sometimes cakes to such an extent around the tails that defecation is impossible and death results.

2. The tail is useless and the blood which promotes its growth can be better utilized elsewhere.

3. Docking is an evidence of careful shepherding. Buyers leave the neglected flocks untouched until the last.

4. In the case of ewes a long tail is sometimes an obstruction in the act of copulation.

5. Docking adds greatly to the appearance of a sheep.

## METHODS OF DOCKING.

Docking, carefully performed, is seldom followed by bad results. True, a little bleeding may occur when a knife is used, but it does not usually attain dangerous or serious proportions. Generally a lamb when released after docking will run to its mother and commence sucking. This shows that the operation is by no means severe. Bleeding may be prevented by searing the end of the tail or, where the knife is used, by tying twine, which may be removed eight or ten hours after the operation, tightly around the tail above the wound. The most favourable age for docking is, in the instance of ewes, at ten to fourteen days old and, with rams, five to seven days after castration. Castration and docking may be done at the same time, but it is better in the case of small flocks to have an interval between the two operations.



Position of the pincers in docking lambs.

The tail should be severed at the third joint of the vertebrae. Docking should be performed in the morning, so that excessive bleeding will be detected and remedied before night.

There are two methods of docking, firstly, by using a knife, and secondly, by the aid of pincers. The first method consists of placing the lamb between the operator's legs, its rear end in front of him, and of simply cutting through the tail from the underside at the desired joint with an ordinary heavy jack-knife. The joint can be found by feeling on the underside of the tail. The skin on the underside of the tail should be drawn up toward the body of the lamb, so that when the tail is severed

it comes down over the end of the joint, which induces coagulation of the blood and facilitates healing. A little disinfectant on the wound assists the healing and prevents infection. The tail may be placed on a board and severed by means of a chisel and mallet, but the knife is more accurate and is not so liable to bruise the tail bones. In the second method, the operator requires an assistant and a pair of iron pincers are used. They are heated in a fire and the operation is performed while they are hot, thereby searing the wound which prevents bleeding. However, pus not infrequently collects underneath the scab which forms, and the suppuration which ensues may cause an aftermath of greater pain to the lamb than the sharp, clean cut of a knife. Of course, danger of infection is more liable from a knife wound, yet when clean bedding and strict sanitary measures are employed this will, to a very great extent, be obviated.



Method of docking lambs with the knife.



Even a woman can perform the operation of docking successfully.

A few extracts from letters follow. These will serve to illustrate the viewpoint of packers, drovers and live stock commission agents with respect to the castration of ram lambs sold for slaughter.

"We believe that one-third of our total receipts of lambs are not docked nor castrated and these practically all come from the northern part of Alberta. Might say that a large percentage of the lambs from the southern part of the province are docked and castrated. On account of the above we figure on deducting about 1c. per pound on all the buck lambs after they get pretty well grown."

"Might state that the percentage of lambs not trimmed that I am handling would be about 30 per cent; the reduction in price runs about \$1 per cwt., due to omission of castration."

"The percentage of lambs coming to market here not castrated is about 15 to 20 per cent. Good ewe and wether lambs weighing from 80 to 90 pounds each are selling here now at 8 cents per pound. Heavy buck lambs sell at 6½ cents a pound, and there is also the reduction in price made by the buyers."

" This season's lambs offered for sale up to October 1 showed about 75 per cent bucks; since October 1 about 25 per cent bucks.

" This pronounced variation in periods is undoubtedly due to the fact that on October 1, 1913, there was a ruling made at the Live Stock Exchange, Toronto, to deduct 75 cents per head on all buck lambs. In the early part of this season the inspection was discontinued and has not been re-established. Our assumption is



Position of the knife in docking lambs.

that the shippers generally understood it would be established October 1, which is the reason for shipping buck lambs prior to October 1. The fact that the ruling was established last year undoubtedly has been the means of increasing castration by the raisers of the country."

" We judge about one-third of our early native lambs which arrive at this market during July, August and September have not been castrated nor doeked. However, the balance of the year the native lambs are practically all castrated.

" In regard to our western range lambs will add, that it is very seldom that a lamb is found which has been neglected in either regard and we find them much more desirable, from not only a killer's standpoint, but for feeding purposes as well.

" Your campaign along these lines should receive the approval and co-operation of every farmer throughout Canada, as it will mean dollars to every man who raises lambs."

"We think that about 25 per cent of the lambs coming here are not docked. Of course this is only a guess, as we have not taken the necessary pains to know definitely.

"Regarding the reduction in price due to the omission of castration we would say that after the first of September, buyers of lambs would give  $\frac{1}{2}$  c. per pound and upwards more for ewe and wether bunches of lambs than they would for bunches of buck lambs. We are getting a bigger percentage of castrated lambs this year than we were last year, but there are still a large number of lambs coming here which should have been castrated."

"We find that practically 40 per cent of the lambs coming to our market are not docked nor castrated. On an average they sell at from 50 to 75 cents per cwt. less than ewes and wethers.

"At the present time there is a marked difference. Ewes and wethers have been bringing this week from \$7.90 to \$8.10 per cwt., while ram lambs have been bringing from \$6.75 to \$7 per cwt."

