

PROGRESSIVE FARMER

THE INDUSTRIAL AND EDUCATIONAL INTERESTS OF OUR PEOPLE PARAMOUNT TO ALL OTHER CONSIDERATIONS OF STATE POLICY.

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Agriculture

HARRY FARMER'S TALKS.

XLII.

Correspondence of The Progressive Farmer.

The nights are lengthening a little and we do not have to retire so early in order to get enough sleep. We have more time to read. The farmer should have some good books on agriculture in addition to the farm papers taken, and study them. "First Principles of Agriculture," by Voorhees, is a splendid work. It tells us what fertilizers to use for certain crops; how to prepare the soil; composition of soils; how to tell what plants are "nitrogen traps" (this alone would be worth dollars to all farmers); how to raise stock, including the different kinds; how to breed; what breed to select for different purposes; the kinds and quantities of feed to use, whether you want beef or milk; sheep for wool or mutton; the different kinds of hogs; and wherever you farm he names the breed most popular in your section, and lots of other matter that a farmer needs to know. This book can be had of The Progressive Farmer. If Harry Farmer could have had this book 15 or 20 years ago it would have been worth more to him than the same weight in gold. But, brother farmer, did you ever think it is only the knowledge used that benefits? You may read all the agricultural literature published and follow in the old ruts of 50 years ago and you will really go backward. For conditions change in agricultural matters as much as anything else, and we must study to meet these constant changes.

We heard a gentleman who travels a great deal say that he met a farmer who was proud of his Irish potato crop this year, and that farmer said, "I read Harry Farmer's way of planting Irish potatoes and tried it, which resulted in the largest crop of my life." Of course the traveling man knew nothing about who Harry Farmer was. We mention to show what one often gains by following the experience of others. We were a failure at potato growing for years. Now our crop of potatoes is as certain as that of corn and cotton. We are always glad to know that we have helped others, and hope to do more in the future. Some of the readers of The Progressive Farmer may want to know our age. Harry Farmer is not an old man yet—just a little past 40. So we hope our work is just begun.

HARRY FARMER.

Columbus Co., N. C.

THE NEW GATLING PLOW.

The much-talked-of Gatling plow, heralded by some as a sign of the fulfillment of the ancient prophecy that men should "beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks," is thus discussed by the Nashville Advocate:

Dr. Gatling, the inventor of the famous rapid-firing gun that bears his name, is now said to have invented a plow by which one man can turn the sod of a thirty-acre field in a single day. It would seem but just that the arts of peace should have the service of his inventive genius as a kind of compensation for the great advance achieved by that genius in the arts of war. It would be a pleasure to be able to claim that the great inventor had turned away from machines that tear the bodies of men to give his time and talents to inventing machines that tear up the soil in agriculture. It would be a pleasure to be able to state that the world over the materials that once went to the manufacture of weapons of warfare are now being directed to the making of plow shares. But the rivalry among nations to secure at any cost the most modern and most deadly engines for the destruction of human life, together with the increase in armies and navies over the world, shows that no such change has taken place. If the invention eventuates in revolutionizing agriculture, it will be only a proof that great inventions are as actively and eagerly sought by the vast interests of commerce and agriculture as by the nations for war.

FARMERS CAN CONTROL THE PRICE OF COTTON SEED.

Correspondence of The Progressive Farmer.

There are but two great companies now buying cotton seed. All the smaller ones have been swallowed up by these. They have unlimited resources by which they have swooped in all the smaller mills, and are now possessed of a monopoly by which they can regulate the price to suit themselves. The failure of corn to a great degree South and West of the Mississippi river will of necessity put the hog crop very high.

Now, the only remedy is for the farmers to unite and refuse to sell their cotton seed for less than 35 cents per bushel. The seed can be utilized at home for feed or in making fertilizers. Nitrogen is one ingredient in all high grade fertilizers, and the best source to get it is from cotton seed meal. The time has come for every farmer to take advantage in saving all products of the farm. It will be to the farmer's interest to feed to his hogs, sheep, cattle or other stock every surplus pound of feed he may be able to raise, then use the home-made manure to enrich his lands, that their fertility may be increased.

But if the price is sufficient to justify the sowing of seed to these mills that the oil may be extracted, sell them; but it is poor policy to rob the soil of that which naturally belongs to it.

The best of steak now commands fifteen cents a pound, and roast ten to twelve and a half cents; and with such prices we cannot afford to allow our farms to run down for the sake of a few dollars, when it would be just as easy—by united action—to compel a rich syndicate to pay what the seed are worth, or use them at home. And since we have learned the great value of cotton seed meal, and corn stalks shredded for roughage, there is no reason why this country should not excel as a beef-raising country, unless our farmers prefer to sell their feed stuff in its crude state for half its value.

J. B. ALEXANDER.

Mecklenburg Co., N. C.

THE FARMER'S VACATION.

After the long and tiresome work of the season—since early spring until late summer, the farmer and his family need a vacation fully as much as does the family in the city, but it is very difficult to find the time and money both at the same time for the enjoyment of the needed recreation. And then it is often almost impossible for more than one member of the family to leave home duties at a time, especially if a trip is to be taken for any considerable distance; but whenever arrangements can be made for a vacation after the hard work of the season is over let it be done, even if it means only for one or two days off, and that, too, only a few miles from home.

The writer has for twenty-six years stuck pretty closely to the every-day duties of the farm and now a vacation of a few weeks to the old boyhood's home in New England is contemplated; but yet a lot of much-needed work on the farm stares him in the face. What is to be done? The doctor says it ever will be so and the only way to do is to drop everything and go. I don't know but that he is right. It is certain that at all times I can see something that I want to do either in the line of permanent improvements or to increase the crops or income of the farm, so that if I wait until these are all done it is likely that the old home and friends will never be visited.

What is true in the case of this farm no doubt is true in thousands of other cases. Can you not arrange for some sort of a vacation even if but a brief one? There is no question but that it will do you good in a great measure. You will see many new things to think of after you get home, and it will perhaps aid you in your own farm work. If you go among farmers keep an eye open as to their methods; examine their stock and crops. Perhaps you may find a variety of seed which you will want to try on your own farm.—F. H. D., Steuben Co., N. Y.

THINKS WE SHOULD SHRED THE COTTON PLANT.

Correspondence of The Progressive Farmer.

Letters from the people are always in order in your valuable paper, and now when the cattle ranches of the West are being rapidly converted into wheat fields, is not the time come for us of the South to solve the problem of the world's supply of beef by utilizing the cotton plant as food for cattle? How quickly the cattle when turned into the cotton fields after picking them over devour every part of the plant they can masticate! The mowing machine, cutting two rows at a time, makes quick preparation for the shredder, and soon the pulpy mass of bark, limbs and stalk is in condition for feeding.

Will the progressive Thigpens or Dr. Staton, of Edgecombe, or Gen. Ransom, of Northampton, be the first to make the trial of the plant as feed for cattle, now that the low land corn has been destroyed and feed for stock in great demand?

Lately I had a letter from New York chemists wanting to know if I could furnish them 4,000 pounds of the dried bark of the cotton root, saying they had been paying 3 cents per pound for it. May be cotton again may be king, through we have at this time a large stalk with a prospect of a little over half a crop.

H. P. HARRELL.

Bertie Co., N. C.

In the Review of Reviews for September there is an important illustrated article on "The Economics of Cattle-Ranching in the Southwest," by Robert M. Baker. This is a clear-out exposition of the cattle business as it exists to-day in Texas and other cattle States. The article is the product of first-hand experience.

SECOND CROP POTATOES.

The methods of growing second crop potatoes are not generally known outside of potato districts, though every farmer in the South should devote each year some area to this crop. It has no equal as both eating and a seed potato. The potatoes mature late in autumn, retain their plumpness and do not sprout till late in spring, and possess more vitality and give better results than Northern-grown seed. The tuber sends out but few stems, which are stinky and productive, giving small amount of unmerchable potatoes.

The growing of second crop potatoes is an industry of recent years, and is destined, though the march may be too slow to realize it, to revolutionize potato growing. It saves to the South annually thousands of dollars, and furnishes a seed potato, too, that has no equal.

The greatest trouble in growing second crop potatoes is getting a stand, which may be secured by adopting the following directions:

1. Have soil free from trash, plowed deep and well pulverized.
2. Spread seed in some shaded place out doors, where they will be exposed to the rain and open air for a week or so before planting or let potatoes fully mature and dig fresh and plant.
3. Cut every tube and cut it through the blossom end and plant soon after cutting. The blossom end sends out the first sprouts. Leave enough tuber to give support to the young vine.
4. Plant when soil is very moist. Never plant in dry dirt. This is a vital point.
5. Plant about 6 inches apart in the row. Many tubers will never sprout.
6. Cover shallow, one light furrow is sufficient, and cover before the furrow dries.
7. It is better to roll the ground after planting, though this is rarely done.
8. Destroy bugs by using Paris green, either in lime, ashes, dust or plaster as a dry mixture, or in water use a teaspoonful of poison to two gallons of water. Keep mixture well stirred when applying. Use a little more poison for dry mixture. Too much poison will kill the vines and too little will not destroy the bugs effectually.—W. F. D., in Tennessee Agriculturist.

Live Stock and Dairy.

SHEEP IN THE SOUTH.

XII.

The Mutton Business—Mutton vs. Hog Meat—The South Peculiarly Adapted to "Spring Lamb" and Fat Mutton Industry—It Should Grasp the Chance Presented Now—Cotton Growing and Sheep Husbandry Form a Trust Combine—On Common Ewes, First Cross Dorset—Reasons Why—One Ram for 125 Ewes.

Correspondence of The Progressive Farmer.

Up to this chapter not much has been said about keeping sheep for mutton because managing them for either wool or mutton or both is about the same in general and mainly differs only in the feeding-off process.

In the old very thickly settled countries as in some parts of our own, the usefulness of the sheep for mutton is the first or prime purpose, the fleece being secondary. However, in our country, with such vast areas of wild and other uncultivated acres of grazing lands, it may yet be a half or a whole century before the mutton market will cease to be fluctuated from whole flocks of mutton of common quality thrown upon it from the grazing regions. If the masses of our people were trained up in the use of good mutton as thoroughly as they have been in the use of pork, the mutton market could not be so crippled at times because all the commoner winter mutton sheep offered would be readily taken by feeders and fed up to a high standard before reaching the shambles.

The writer sees the day of this general condition of the meat market approaching, but from several causes its coming is gradual in the South and by far too slow for the business, but especially so for the people who would be so greatly benefited by it. The noted Kendall, of Texas, used to boast to me that his Merino mutton saddles were three inches thick, and that he never required his employees to eat hog meat, but furnished them fat mutton roasted, boiled or fried, hot or cold all the time. If there was a Kendall sheep man on every two miles square of the Gulf States to practice and advise the use of mutton, instead of so much hog meat, the health of the people would be greatly improved and millions more money would be made and saved to them.

It is in the education of the masses to the use of fat mutton that the South holds such an important place. Its natural position in this respect cannot be acquired by any other part of the nation. She is now confronted with that opportunity.

If she does not grasp and hold it as her peculiar own, her privilege will surely be supplanted by her versatile, industrious and ever vigilant Northern brothers, who will find ways and means to overcome and surpass her natural advantages of climate and vegetation.

If she will intelligently and industriously take it up, in less than ten years she will develop an industry co-existent with that of cotton, and which will not supplant it but prove its most important adjunct.

The conditions are here. The people are here. The market is also lately waiting. Will the enterprising, industrial great people of the South brush the mists from before their eyes so as to see and grasp and hold this great business that may be theirs? A few of the quicker in enterprise may do this and by example open the way and make it clear to the more conservative.

As a general proposition a mutton sheep farm should be rich with rather level or bottom land capable of throwing up a strong growth of triennial grasses; yet such condition is not essential, it is only convenient as they have it over in Kentucky and West Virginia.

Even a poor, hilly sandy ridge and rocky farm or plantation, can be made in a few years an excellent and profitable sheep farm. When these two conditions exist on the same plantation, no higher ideal for the business need be sought for.

Any farm or plantation even of bottom lands that is sufficiently drained either natural or artificial,

so that it produces heavy crops of cotton in wet as well as dry seasons, is one that is well adapted to sheep husbandry, and especially so as a mutton sheep farm. On such a place it is all the more necessary that the sheep be provided with ample, dry and comfortable housing quarters, and lots surrounding so that any green crop or other food may be cut and fed to them in their racks.

Modern agriculture, especially in production of cotton and sheep husbandry, particularly for mutton, will readily adjust themselves together as concomitant industries, thus forming a splendid trust combine.

To engage in this business, it is not necessary to buy a high-priced flock of thoroughbred South Downs, Dorsetts or Shropshires, which of course would be the best, but for most beginners, buy a flock of good common ewes or grades, as good as can be had, say 125 ewes. I would incline to cross them first with the largest, well-formed, heaviest-fleeced pedigree Dorset ram I could find. Have him show up the characteristics of his breed as fully as possible.

With single service one ram two years old would be quite sufficient. To manage this, do not turn the stock ram with the flock, but securely apron a common ram, turn him with the flock every morning and draw out to a pen by themselves every ewe that he finds in season, then turn out the flock and keep the teaser safely by himself during the day till needed next day again. Meantime, having the stock ram in a pen by himself, turn one ewe in to him about every hour for single service only, until all for that day are served and turned out in a served lot by themselves, until fourteen days from the beginning, when the ewes may all be turned together and the stock ram with them. If the ewes have been properly fed and tended, there will not be in two weeks over ten or fifteen of the flock unserved except what may come in a second time.

In the Gulf States, and for early lambs to ship North, have them come from 10th of January to 1st of February, as nearly as possible; that is, mate them to the ram about the 10th of August to September 1st, and be prepared to house and care for the lambs properly. If the ewes have been well fed on wheat bran and cotton seed meal or chopped oats and cotton seed meal, they should be in good condition, especially if it has been mixed with finely-cut or shredded clover hay, pea vines, or fodder corn, and near lambing time have such feed wet up together for them. There is only one way better to give such feed, and that is to steam it for them.

I am writing now of the first cross, the weather lambs of which perhaps may best be sold to butchers of neighboring cities, without putting on too much shipping expenses. Thus a home demand would be built up, for no person who has once tasted such a fat lamb roast once can refrain from buying it again. However, if the lambs have been nicely fed and are very fat by the last of March, they can be expressed in neat light crates to Washington, Boston, New York or Chicago and sold at a price that should be a pleasing surprise to a cotton grower. If the lambs are to be sold as "spring lamb" they need not be castrated or docked. It is better not. If the owner has room and plenty of feed on his plantation, he may very profitably keep them over, stall feed them the next winter up to an average weight of 150 pounds and sell them at six cents a pound in early spring.

Such early lambs when kept over should be shorn the last part of June, and it is better for the growth and health of the January ewe lambs to so shear them. Such wool when put in the right Eastern market commands a good price. Keep the flock of ewe lambs growing fast as possible but not "rolling fat" for three years and their development will be complete. Some carelessly allow such lambs to breed the first fall, but it surely is better to allow them a year and a half growth before mating them.

Breed the old ewes to the same

ram until three crops are had, unless he has proved to be a bad breeder, which to a beginner who is starting to build up a flock is a most unfortunate mistake and loss. In breeding up to a good flock it is absolutely essential that the stock ram for such an important place be first-class in every respect for the purposes intended. Using the same ram for the three years in each cross gives great uniform propensity of characteristics in the coming flock of ewes which is a most important matter.

Besides this, one can afford to be more particular in selecting the ram he is to use three years instead of one, if necessary can pay a higher price for him; then if he has proved to be a fine stock getter, he may be sold for a fair price.

I name the Dorset for the first cross because of the known fecundity of that breed; because he is a large, well-formed mutton animal; because of the quality as well as quantity of his wool and because the contrast between him and the supposed ewe flock is not so great as if they were mated with a Shropshire, an Oxford or a Lincoln. I should want to know that he was a twin, so also his sire and dam, for two generations if possible.

The above several characteristics of the Dorset sheep should be strongly manifest in the ewe lambs from time, and if they do not show up so, the ram has not been what he should be of his breed.

SAMUEL ARCHER.

Marion, McDowell Co., N. C.

THE GENERAL PURPOSE COW.

Correspondence of The Progressive Farmer.

The habit of speaking of the general purpose cow some times leads people into classing with this animal the no-purpose cow. This latter animal is in evidence on a great many farms, and it has done more toward injuring dairying and the cattle business than anything else. The no-purpose cow is much like the mongrel dog or the barn yard fowl. Neither has any particular breed possibilities or capabilities. They exist because they are the products of a lazy, careless system. They do not help their owner much, but tend to discourage him with his life.

The no-purpose cow is the product of indifferent systems of farming, and it is an animal which is neither good for milk nor beef. She is usually a good feeder, an excellent feeder in fact, but not much of a producer. It is astonishing sometimes to know where the food goes which she eats, for it is converted neither into fat, flesh nor milk. It must make bone, muscle or sinew, for the flesh of the animal is generally tough enough when eaten.

Now, the general no-purpose cow is a cross or type intermediate between the beef and dairy type. This animal, strictly speaking, is the product of careful and good breeding, and is not the outcome of chance or accident. She has been bred for a dual purpose, and if she comes up to anticipations she is a good milker and a good beef-producer. While not as good as the best beef animals or the finest dairy cows in producing flesh or milk, she nevertheless possesses the ability to partake of each to a considerable degree. She is eminently adapted to the general farmer who wishes milk, and later a fat cow for the shambles, with calves which will produce good veal in a short time from birth. It may not be generally known, but it is more difficult to raise such an animal than a typical beef or dairy cow. The danger, however, comes in with the no-purpose cow. In trying to secure a good general-purpose animal we may stumble upon the former. This should be avoided in every possible way, for the investment would prove as unsatisfactory as any possibly could on the farm.

E. P. SMITH.

The value of a ram is not based on the service of a year. Where a flock is at all permanent, that ram's influence extends down through the generations. Man has no power to measure his influence, and so a few dollars should not stand in the way of a person buying animals to head the flock that answer to high standards.—C. S. Plumb, Ind.