

THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER.

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

Volume XVIII.

RALEIGH, N. C., TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1903.

Number 33.

AGRICULTURE

Sheep Husbandry in the South.

Editor of The Progressive Farmer:

If it be not too late I will try to fulfil a long ago promise to give the readers of The Progressive Farmer the result of our experience with the 200 American Merino (fine wool) ewes and three stock rams purchased and brought from Illinois to North Carolina last year. Up to shearing time this last spring we had lost fifteen old ewes, seven and a half per cent, and had gained about fifty per cent in young sheep.

Last year the wool of 200 ewes and stock rams bought us \$375.75, or about \$1.85 per head net. This year the same ewes, less the per cent of loss, but with the per cent of gain, brought us \$425, or about \$1.45 per head. We sold only three ewe lambs but a number of rams last fall and more this summer to the greater parts of the State as well as to near neighbors at from \$10 to \$25—averaging about \$15 per head.

In noting the falling off of 40 cents per head it must be understood that the 100 lamb fleeces went in the average and they being so young, never shear so heavy as the old ones, because they are generally much smaller and do not have a year's fleece on them. However, the ewes did not average as heavy fleeces because they had the whole year only the common wild grasses of the South—much of the time woods pasture—and in the winter while they had a fair supply of grain, yet cotton-seed hulls and other rougher forage than they had been used to in Illinois. I think their fleeces fell short of last year's from two to three pounds. Last year our heaviest ewe fleece was eighteen pounds; this year the heaviest one we noted was fourteen pounds, but the average ewes was still over ten pounds as compared with thirteen pounds last year. I am confident that if they had been grazed on the same kinds, or rather quantity of tame grasses as in Illinois and sheltered from the bleaching rains, they would have shorn as much or more than last year. But they got fully bleached out in rains as the fine sheep barns now up were not up till January.

One reason I have for thinking they would shear even heavier than in Illinois with the same keep, is that our three stock rams that were housed from storms and at night the year round and fed as such high class rams are fed there, shore twenty-five pounds aggregate, more than last year—one that shore twenty pounds last year shore even thirty pounds this year; one that shore twenty-six last year shore thirty-two pounds this year, and the one that shore twenty-nine pounds shore thirty-eight pounds this year.

The fact that the whole flock of sheep lived through the year in our climate and fared on our Southern food and were subject to our conditions all around, all of which is very different from Illinois, seems to me to be prima facie evidence that our fine wool American Merino sheep will live, thrive and be profitable here in the South.

As for diseases that are contagious, infectious or prevailing, or that caused them to "die like sheep" on account of our climate, our land, or its products, we have had no such experience. The greatest enemy to sheep husbandry in every section where I have kept them, in fact, in all countries, is worms of one and another kind that infest one or more of the vital organs. When a flock becomes so infested, prompt acting and efficient worm-destroying medicine must be given the flock as they may die off like hogs do when attacked with cholera or like cattle with "Texas fever." If in the summer they should be changed to fresh pasture several times and if in winter their barns should be thoroughly cleaned out and their floors, racks and troughs disinfected, while the remedies are given the sheep until all traces disappear and the flock becomes healthy.

When little bunches of sheep are kept as they are now in the South where they have free run of very large pastures, they will select herbage in plants that are antidote to worms and mostly avoid their violent attacks or disastrous power; where hundreds of sheep are kept together on plantations, such antidote plants are soon consumed and if the sheep from any cause begin to decline in condition, there comes the parasite worm breeding opportunity to increase by millions and help the poor sheep down hill to the bone yard rapidly.

If the sheep have plenty of good, wholesome food to eat, so as to keep them in fine thriving condition all the time, their physical organization is quite able to throw off disease and danger from worms even better than other kinds of stock when kept in large numbers. Impure water, mouldy

or partly decayed grains or fodders and infected quarters of lousy calves, cattle or other wise diseased stock promote and sometimes initiate worm disease in sheep that would otherwise be healthy.

Last spring we discovered that worms were in our yearlings. We at once separated the diseased from the well sheep as well as possible every few days, and cleaned out all the quarters in that building, which is 100 x 25 x 16 feet, long wide and high, and had in it over 300 sheep. We disinfected the ground floor, racks and troughs with sulphur, rosin, borax, etc., and gave the sheep pine boughs, rosin, sulphur, etc., and the sick ones sulphur, copperas, worm powders and sulphate of iron. The last two, and especially the latter, with plenty of salt seemed very efficacious, and soon it was unhealthy for worms but quite wholesome for sheep.

Shortly after that a friend, Rev. Elwood E. Smith, of Settle, Iredell County, wrote me his flock of lambs were beginning to die from what I believed was worms. I wrote him the remedies, and he soon informed me that not another one died after he began treatment. This summer I visited him to deliver a pair of little rams for his flock, and have seldom seen a more healthy and beautiful lot of lambs and ewes than he showed me. He wants to have about seventy-five half-blood Merino lambs next spring. His sheep are common, with perhaps a grade of South Down mixture.

He takes good care of his sheep, feeding them well and housing them every night, getting all the benefit from their manure, and says his land grows richer and his grass better from keeping sheep. Has mutton and spring lamb on his table every summer. He sends no money North for hog meat, but keeps it at home to help school his children that are now becoming teachers and useful citizens who can find plenty of paying work to do in North Carolina. They do not seem to have any desire to go off West hunting jobs. He has large fenced pastures, and the young ones have been taught how to house the flocks in the evening and turn them out in the mornings. They all like sheep and the sheep like them, and they are both successful. They are progressive. Mr. Smith showed me a field of peas, growing on a high ridge, that were bench high, wallowed down and still growing. He hinted

that sheep manure was to blame for it, but he is going to keep more sheep and better ones instead of fewer, and says it is the easiest way to work a farm and make a living and to make money; that he always gets cash for his wool and for his surplus mutton, and that he especially wants more wool on his sheep.

I give Mr. Smith, as an example, of "how the wind blows" in the sheep business up this way, but must say that I have sold more yearling rams in the middle and eastern part of the State this summer than in the western part.

Mr. Editor, when you opened up your columns about three years ago to my writing on sheep husbandry in the South, I had no idea it would result in my being here in the business to-day, for I was determined then to go to Washington, and there to engage in it. But so it is, and I have not yet regretted it, although I met with discouragements sometimes that almost upset me. Some friends wanted me to get back to near Statesville, and I may.

There is one thing I had almost forgotten to speak of. We are raising only about 40 per cent of lambs for the number of ewes we have this year. Not that we lost so many of the living lambs, but the ewes failed to have lambs. Never in any year, under any conditions, did I have nearly so small a per cent of lambs.

Now for the cause of it; and I can only attribute it to feeding cotton-seed meal and hulls and cotton seed which the ewes had more or less of from November till spring. From what I can learn from others in the South, I think we have reason to believe such feed was the cause of it. I am so fully convinced of this that I would not risk such feed to a lot of ewes again during that period of the year, although I believe the cotton seed products excellent for other sheep, especially to fatten them and good for ewes at any other time.

Now, if any readers of The Farmer want to see a lot of as fine looking sheep as ever walked in the State, we invite them to come and see us, or come to the Greensboro Fair or the State Fair, and perhaps others, where I hope to show a few specimens of the flock.

SAMUEL ARCHER.

Statesville, N. C.

Whipping the overloaded team is a poor way of trying to overcome the faults of a bad road.