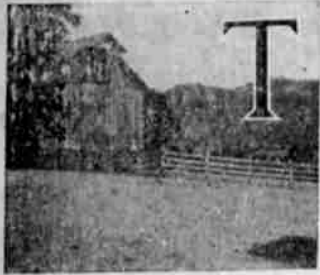


The Douglas County Flocks

(By E. F. Strong, Oakland.)



THAT the most profitable live stock industry in this county is sheep raising, has been demonstrated by the experience of many stockmen in this section. Douglas produces more sheep and more wool than any county west of the Cascades, and it actually pastures more sheep than some of the counties of Eastern Oregon. Agricultural statistics credit this county with eighty thousand wool bearing individuals. The real figures may equal one hundred thousand, as the assessor's figures do not equal the actual number. These thousands are owned in farm flocks chiefly from 50 to 400 in number. There are a few larger bands, but they are exceptional.

The particular adaptability of Douglas ranges to sheep is the fact of its peculiar climate and the character of its lands. The lush pastures here extend through the months of March, April, May, and June. During this period any land owner can carry double the stock in quantity than the remainder of the year. The best lambs are born in January and February, and then grow and mature during the next four months. The best sheep raisers market their lambs in May, June, and July. Then, as the dry season comes with brown pastures, the flock is cut down to the normal number by selling the lambs. It also should be remembered that at this time the markets are better than when the eastern Oregon lambs are filling the market from July until winter.

Th pastures of Douglas county are generally made up of well drained hill soils, which frequently are light lands. The verdure on these hills is such that often it is not fit for cattle but sheep eat 90 per cent of the weeds, and gnaw at the rest. In the winter they eat the ever prevalent "Tipton" weed, and anything else with a little green in its color. They take this poor feed and turn it into profitable wool and mutton.

Although the sheep of Douglas county in a good year bring to their owners a little less than half a million dollars. And this income is dependable. There is also a good per centage of profit, something made clear for the owners.

The breeds of sheep raised here are at present rather a varied mixture. The old stock has been chiefly merino, with now and then a mixture of

black face rams. About eight years ago on the advice of Oregon Agriculture professors, large quantities of Lincoln blood were infused.

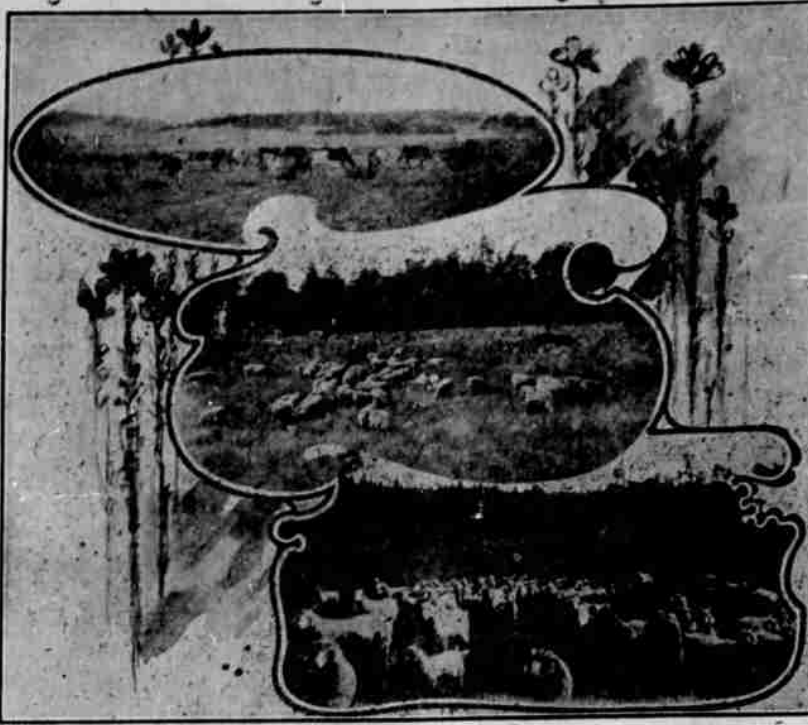
This was a very bad error on the part of the college. The Lincoln is a noble type of sheep, for the Willamette valley with its productive lands, flat and wet for two thirds the year. But in no way did it fit the Douglas county hilly country, and the rather sparse pasture for one third the year. The particular needs of Douglas county are for a smaller, compact, close feeding breed, which can stand three months drought on dried up pastures. A sheepman can keep two such sheep where he can keep one of the large type sheep and make much greater profit; for he will find himself raising two lambs where he had raised but one before.

Douglas county has not reached its zenith in the sheep business. Many men are starting nucleus for pure bred registered flocks. There are now pure bred merinos in Douglas county, Oxford, Hampshire and Shropshire.

To most people a sheep is a sheep. However, there is as much difference in the breeds as there is in the nations of people. Thus various conditions can be met by carrying the kind of sheep raised.

The farm flock method, prevailing here, makes it possible to raise a different kind of sheep than where sheep must be herded as in eastern Oregon. It may therefore be interesting to note briefly the different breeds being established here, and some of the characteristics.

Most of the original stocks were based on the Merino breed while some persons may look down upon the



CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS ARE MONEY MAKERS IN THE UMPQUA VALLEY

humble Merino as of low quality, yet here is no kind of sheep which has had as dramatic a history as the American Merino. No sheep has ever sold for such high prices, and no sheep has ever sheared as much wool or produced such a fine grade of wool.

Merinos were introduced first in the United States in 1793, when Mr. Wm. Foster of Boston, Mass. brought a ram and two ewes to New England. They were presented to Mr. Andrew Craigie of Cambridge. He thought little of the sheep and slaughtered them. Afterward he paid \$1,000 for a single ram.

In 1801 other Merinos were brought from Spain, their native country. In 1810, when the fine wool craze struck the United States 10,000 were imported. Ewes sold as high as \$1,000, and rams for \$1,500. With the close of this craze or boom ended the importation of Spanish Merinos into the United States.

In 1860 the second great Merino boom began. One ram was sold for \$10,000, many others for \$2,500. After the boom had receded normal values were restored. But during this time in Vermont, the famous American Merino had been evolved. This type of sheep is characterized by the heavy folds or wrinkles, the yolk of the fleece averaging 70 per cent of the weight of the fleece. These sheep, although inferior for mutton with poor

shape of body and hams, became famous the world over, and were bred and shipped all over the earth for breeding purposes. Australia purchased many of them. During the same period a smoother, better mutton type was being selected in the Ohio, West Virginia region. This is known as the Delaine type. The ideal is perfectly free from folds with wool less thick than the Vermont type, being only 20,000 fibers to the square inch. While the weight of the Vermont type for rams is placed at 140 pounds and ewes 100 pounds; the Delaine type is, for rams, 175, ewes 125 pounds.

All of the Merino flocks do not run true to their classification in practical experience. Three types constantly crop out, the original Vermont Merino, an intermediate type, and the Delaine type.

The strong points of the Merino breed, are first its fine wool, second its herding habits, thirdly its natural strength and ability to live on poor, sparse pastures, combined with a less liability to worms.

The Rambouillet breed is a direct descendant of the Merino. In 1783 Louis XVI introduced 366 Spanish sheep into France. From these sheep the Rambouillet or French Merino has been evolved by selection. Introductions of this sheep have since made into the United States since 1810. A German branch of the family has also been imported. However, until recent years this breed did not give satisfaction on account of inability to adapt itself here. Now, however, it is widespread and is a great success. They produce a good quality of mutton, and a wonderful fleece, second only to the original Merino. American Rambouillots are now so high class that they have been exported to Africa. Rams should weigh 175 to 225 pounds, ewes in normal condition 130 to 160 pounds.

The registry associations of the Merino breed are in a badly mixed condition, there being several associations. The Rambouillet have two associations. In buying any of these breeds it is well to see that the type of sheep fits exactly what is represented, as Merinos are frequently sold for Rambouillots.

The Course Wools

The two course wool breeds, which have been introduced in Douglas county are the Cotswold and the Lincoln. The Cotswold is one of the leading breeds of the world for cross breeding. Large numbers have been brought to the United States since the first part of the last century. However, there are few flocks in the east, as other breeds have proven more adaptable. Fine flocks exist in the Willamette valley and in the state of Wisconsin.

It is suited for rich lands with much feed, and does not do so well on rolling lands with broken pastures. Rams should weigh 300 to 350 pounds, ewes 200 to 250 pounds. Fleece should weigh about 12 pounds, the wool grading as braid and low quarter combing wool.

Of recent years more Lincoln sheep have been introduced into Douglas County than Cotswold. The Lincoln is supposed to be the largest breed of sheep. In a general way Lincoln and Cotswold sheep are each unpopular in Douglas county now, because of the coarseness of the wool and the discount placed. Breeding has now produced many fine ewes, which are now being pastured.

The Lincoln is adapted to fertile and arable farming districts, as they do not do well on short and broken pasture. One registered herd of 80 sheep was brought here. The first winter about forty died.

Lincolns are bred in the Willamette valley which equal any of this breed in the world. The wool should weigh 12 to 15 pounds a fleece, grading braid and low quarter blood combing. The rams should weigh 350 to 375 pounds, the ewes 225 to 275 pounds.

At one time two years' growth of wool was allowed to stay on Lincoln sheep in some instances, the wool being sold in competition with mohair for false hair and other purposes.

The Down Breeds

Considerable Oxford blood has been introduced into this section. Some registered ewes are also here. This is the largest of the down breeds. All of our sheep have come from England, with the exception of the fine wool or Merino breeds.

The Oxford is a cross bred sheep,

being derived chiefly from the Cotswold. Cotswold rams were used on Hampshire ewes. Then Southdown blood was used. This occurred in the thirties and forties of the last century. The sheep is a favorite in Canada. It has been used chiefly in the United States for cross breeding. With good pasture the Oxford gives excellent results. The rams should weigh 250 to 350 pounds, the ewes 180 to 275 pounds. The fleece is heavy, being very long. It should grade one quarter and low quarter combine, although individuals sometimes trade out as braid wool. The breed is fecund, although the lambs do not mature as rapidly as some other breeds.

The Hampshire

Next in size to the Oxford is the Hampshire, of which there are several registered flocks in Douglas county. The breed was evolved about three quarters of a century ago. It is the result of the combination of two native English types, the Wiltshire and the Berkshire Knots. Southdown blood was introduced, and then after a time Cotswold blood was introduced, increasing the size.

Hampshires were imported into Virginia before the Civil War, but records were lost in that calamity. About 1880 large numbers were imported. One importation amounted to 1000 ewes.

The Hampshire lambs are large; they grow rapidly and attain greatest perfection while young. For this reason the rams are great favorites for cross breeding. They require an abundance of feed, and where pastures are short or broken do not do well. However, the rams impart their good characteristics to their offspring, and have proven very satisfactory under local conditions.

Hampshire rams should weigh 225 to 275 pounds. The ewes from 175 to 200 pounds. The fleeces weigh 6 to 8 pounds and grade usually three eighths and one-quarter blood combing. About 75,000 sheep have been registered.

The Famous Shropshire.

All breeders of sheep are familiar with the Shropshires, of which there have been representative flocks in this county for some time. The Shropshire is the youngest of Down breeds, and is a medium sized sheep. The breed originated in Shropshire or Salop about the middle of the last century. The foundation was a small sheep called the Morfe common, this stock being improved by introduction of Southdown, Cotswold and Leicester blood.

In the United States nearly a half million have been registered. This breed is known as the Farmer's sheep because of the profitable combination of wool and mutton. At present the breed is early maturing and of pronounced fecundity. They are not large. Rams should weigh 175 to 250 pounds and ewes from 140 to 180 pounds.

From my own experience they stand up during the dry season and keep their flesh as good as any grade of sheep I have ever handled under exactly the same conditions. Their fleeces should range 8 to 15 pounds. Most Shropshire fleeces should grade three eighths blood combing.

The South Down

The South Down is probably the oldest breed in existence, with the exception of the Merino. The modern development of the South Down has been by selection. The introduction of new blood failing to be successful. The South Down today reigns supreme as breeding animals in the spring lamb region of Kentucky, Tennessee and West Virginia. It is the mutton sheep supreme, having won over half the carcass prizes at the Chicago Livestock exposition. Last spring in March a carload of lambs with South Down sire, sold for \$25 per hundred on the Chicago market, with others quoted at \$15 to \$18.

The South Down has a quality about its mutton that has never been equaled. The lambs average 10 to 50 pounds when from 3 to 4 months old.

However the South Down is not liked here, because of its lack of wool. Then to the sheep owner, the breed seems small. However, it is the "biggest little" sheep in the world, and it noted for the fact that it will thrive on pasture entirely insufficient

for other breeds, except perhaps the Merino.

Rams should weigh 170 to 190 pounds, ewes from 125 to 150 pounds. The fleeces grade as half blood or three eighths blood combing or clothing.

These are the principal breeds which have been used on Douglas soil, in fact they are the predominating breeds in the United States.

Some Problems

Here there are several problems, which take some of the profit out of sheep raising. First come varmint particularly the coyote. Oakland, Oregon, is the center of the sheep district in this section. Leading sheepman there solve the coyote problem by bounty associations, and by running the pests to death with dogs. Many exciting races are recorded on the memories of the participants. The coyote nevertheless kills many lambs.

Then comes the parasitic problem. For a number of years there has been no scab, having been eradicated by dipping. In the sheep we have tape worms and stomach worms. These attack and frequently kill the lambs, late lambs being particularly liable.

A unique problem here is the toad stool danger. Sheep love toad stools, but either do not differentiate between bad and good, or eat too many. I am inclined to the latter opinion. The toad stools and mushrooms being with autumn fields during this period or permitted to run in the woods all the time. The fungus grows chiefly in the timber. By the first method the sheep eat no toadstools. By the second they become used to them gradually. One sheep raiser bought a flock in the Willamette valley this fall; high priced sheep. He placed them on his range. The loss was immediate and heavy.

Some pastures have leech prevalent. It is customary for flock masters in these kinds of pastures, to sell every lamb, and every other year to sell off their ewes and buy new.

The worst problem of the Douglas county sheep man is brush. Brush and timber is constantly encroaching on pasture land. This destroys the carrying power of the land as sheep range. Formerly fire kept the brush down. Today it must be done by slashing or with goats.

The future of the sheep business here appears to be solid, for the reason that the number of sheep in the United States has been decreasing since 1910 slightly. In addition it must be remembered that the United States uses twice as much wool as it produces. If the tariff should be taken off, it would cause another readjustment in the price of sheep. But that is something to be expected.

The best market for lambs is now in California with its big city populations. California buyers some years have paid as much for lambs as the Portland price in Oakland, Oregon.

(Continued on page 23.)



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