

Raising Sheep in the Cornfield

THOSE who have handled sheep on the general farm know that these animals can live, grow and make mutton and wool on much waste herbage that few other animals will eat. Sheep are well known to be the greatest weed and sprout exterminators in existence. The sheep farm is almost universally a clean farm. The saving that a medium-sized flock of sheep will make every year in cleaning fence rows and ridding fence lines and fields of noxious weeds will practically pay for their keeping, especially when they are given credit for fertilizer scattered over the farm to make the grasses and other money crops grow better. Grassy fence rows almost invariably follow where sheep have trimmed the fence rows of weeds and sprouts.

On every farm every year there is waste green herbage that can not be utilized by cattle, horses or hogs, owing to other crops growing in the same fields with the useless herbage. After the last cultivation of corn, for instance, different kinds of summer grasses and many kinds of weeds spring up between the rows and around the sides of the cornfields. The only common way these weeds and summer grasses can be destroyed is with the hoe, an expensive and laborious process. If cattle, horses or hogs were turned into the cornfield to eat the summer grasses, they would totally destroy the corn, and no doubt in many cases injure themselves by overeating of the new corn.

But sheep will effectively clean a cornfield of summer grasses, and almost, if not all, of the weeds, and they will do it without injuring the standing corn. There is nothing sheep like better in the way of green forage than young foxtail and crabgrass, or cow's-foot. Other summer grasses they will eat readily, as well as almost all weeds that grow in cornfields. Ragweeds are their favorite. When turned into a field of standing corn a few weeks after the last cultivation of the crop, about the time the corn begins to shoot and tassel, they will go up and down the rows nipping off the grass and weeds as they come to them, scarcely touching the blades of the standing corn. Later, when they have cleaned the field of weeds and grass, and the fence rows around the field, they will eat the lower blades of corn, but they will not injure the ear corn nor the upper part of the stalks in the least. In doing this work of cleaning and keeping clean the cornfield, they scatter manure of the best kind between all the rows, which is one of the best fertilizations the field can receive.

On many farms, foxtail and crabgrass are serious pests to the soil. In spite of care and clean cultivation they come up, grow and reseed the land every year. There seems to be no common way of eradicating them. But sheep will do it to a clean finish. Where a flock of sheep is turned into a cornfield shortly after the last cultivation, before any of the summer grasses have blossomed and formed seed, they will clean out the grasses and completely prevent seeding. Where this system is followed on the summer-grass-infested farm, soon the farm will be cleaned of the grasses, as the plants will be prevented from forming seed.

The same is true of many of the noxious weeds. The sheep will eat them off and keep them eaten down, so that weed seed formation is impossible.

Where the cornfield is to be sown to wheat, rye or timothy after the corn in the fall, it is an excellent plan to pasture the standing corn with sheep a few weeks previous to corn harvest. Then, after the corn has been removed from the field, the surface will be clean of foreign growth, the land will be evenly manured and the field will be in ideal condition for fall seeding by simply discing and harrowing the ground. Harvesting the corn fodder will be easier where no grass or weeds bother, and where the corn is to be husked from the stalks in the field the work will be easier for the same reason.

In every case where corn is grown for the grain only, to be husked in the field from the standing stalks, it will pay any farmer to pasture the cornfield in late summer and early fall with sheep. Cleaning the field of weeds and grass and the stalks of the lower leaves will make husking of the corn easier, while the fertilizer added to the soil by the animals will be an important gain. Even where the corn is to be cut and used for silage, the loss of a few of the lowest leaves of the corn plants will make no appreciable difference in the yield of silage. Some pasture their cornfields with sheep in late summer even where the corn is to be cut and shocked in the field and the stover to be used dry. The summer grasses are what the sheep will eat first, and if there is enough other kinds of feeds the sheep will not eat many corn leaves.

Many farmers now are buying and feeding lambs during the late summer and fall seasons. Where lambs are to be fattened in the summer cornfield, cowpeas are drilled with the corn to give the lambs a variety and more protein in their field ration. Cowpeas in the rows with the corn grow up and vine to the corn. The two crops thrive well together, the corn making practically as good crop with as without the peas, while the peas contribute nitrogen to the soil. Some are willing to invest in a car load of lambs and drill cowpeas in their corn to be pastured by the lambs simply for the extra fertility added to the land. This is claimed to be one of the cheapest and best ways to fertilize any land, while some direct money is usually made in handling the lambs as market animals. Where the lambs are kept in the cornfield for many weeks in late summer and early fall, consuming the cowpeas in the corn, other herbage in the field, together with some concentrated supplements, a large quantity of manure will be distributed over the field. It is an economical way of applying manure to the land and it is a good way to feed market lambs.

This summer by accident our flock of sheep got into a cornfield where a large truck patch of beans, melons, peppers, tomatoes and potatoes were on one side. To our surprise, when the sheep were found in this field they had not injured the plants of the truck patch in the least, but were eating foxtail and weeds only.—W. F. C.

Milking Kicking Cow

IN BREAKING a heifer, or milking a kicking cow, I never strike, or kick her, or use any violence except to milk her in spite of all she can do to prevent it. The principle is the same made use of by John S. Rarey, Gleason, and other noted horse trainers. In single-handed contests, the animal is made to exhaust its strength in a futile endeavor to become master, and will always yield when conquered by the superior power and intelligence of man.

To break a kicking heifer with her first calf, I put her into a stall and tie her head up short to the manger, so that she cannot back out, nor surge ahead, and give her some dry meal to eat in order to put her into an amiable state of mind. But this will not prevent her from kicking if she don't want to be milked. I do not place the pail directly under her bag. I put an

old cap on my head, stand on my feet, bent over to milk, place my head in the heifer's groin, and take a firm hold of the hind teat on the heifer's right side, with my left hand, and the front fore teat with my right. When she tries to kick, I brace my feet, and stiffen my neck, and back, and hold on to the teats with a bull dog's grip. The left hand is the one she tries to get loose, as it is the one that prevents her from hitting the pail which seems to be her particular object of spite. Standing on my feet, I can vary my position as she varies hers, and if my hold is maintained, she can kick but little, and cannot hit me nor the pail. I do not try to draw any milk while the struggle lasts. I only tighten my grip and maintain my hold.

The length of the struggle depends on the disposition of the heifer. Some, more stubborn than others, will make several fierce fights for the mastery at the first milking, and repeat them with less violence at the second. When she finds that I am master of the situation, and can "hold the fort," that I don't want to hurt her, that I do want the milk, and am determined to have it whether she is willing or not, she gives up the battle and there is no more trouble. I have never known a heifer to injure her teats by my holding on to them while she was kicking.

Gentle old cows will sometimes kick when they have cracked teats that hurt when milked, and they must be milked forcibly. Our best, and gentlest

cow cut one of her teats badly in getting over a barbed wire fence, where a tree had been blown down across it. As she was in full flow of milk the teat had to be milked. It was very sore and she would not allow it to be touched, and when I took hold of it she kicked furiously. I had to milk that teat by force. She fought harder than heifers, but when she gave up, and allowed the teat to be squeezed, she trembled and quivered with pain and exhaustion. I never had a heifer, or cow, that I could not milk by force, and when broken they staid broken.

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