

Livestock and Dairy

Knowing the Market Demands and Raising Stock to Meet It.

V. A. Staffan, an experienced sheep grower, who has a personal knowledge of methods in foreign countries, contributes an interesting article on early history of the sheep.

PHILIP THE GOOD, Duke of Burgundy, in 1429, at the time of his marriage, instituted the military order of Toison d'or, or the Golden Fleece; it was said on account of the profit he made by wool. At the end of the collar of the order hung a Golden Fleece with this device, "Pretinum non vile laborum," (the laborer is worthy of his hire).

Linnaeus, the great Swedish naturalist, who wrote in the middle of the 18th century, appears to have given more careful and thorough research into the origin and history of sheep than any writer I have been able to discover. The sheep, as typified by the domesticated breeds of the European representatives of which Linnaeus gave the name of *Ovis Arius*, was one of the earliest animals to be brought under subjection by man. It is known to have been domesticated by the inhabitants of the prehistoric lake dwellings of Switzerland, by whom it appears to have been brought from the East. Indeed, all research seems to make plain the fact that the sheep from which all the domesticated flocks descend were natives of the elevated table land of Central Asia. It is also depicted among the earliest of the Egyptian monuments and its remains were mummified by the inhabitants of the Delta during the Pharaonic Epoch. Two distinct breeds are noted from this date.

The First Shepherd.

The first shepherd of which history gives an account was Abel, second son of Adam. Through him sheep enter the first tragedy of the human race. At first sight it seems strange—on reflection it seems to be a necessity of the case—that the territory on which the flocks of the ancient Patriarchs were fed and tended is still the home of the shepherds, and that there for forty centuries sheep have wandered from pasture to pasture under the care of their nomadic proprietors.

The skins of the animals gave place to the manufactured garments of wool at the time of the Conquest of Spain by the ancient Romans, 206 B. C., when that country was celebrated for its flocks and the quality of its wool. Today the Spanish Merino is equally celebrated, though lost to Spain. Before the Christian Era the fine wools of Italy were noted and the fineness of the fleece was cultivated to a degree unknown to us of the present day. The sheep were housed and clothed, their skins oiled and moistened with wine, their fleeces were combed and washed repeatedly. This treatment destroyed the vigor and impaired the constitution of the sheep. Their descendants, though inferior in form, are still fine wool sheep. It is only in sparsely settled countries that sheep are cultivated for wool alone. The wonderful wealth of Asia during the 12th century, of which its flocks were largely the cause, deserves a special chapter.

Livestock for New World.

On the second voyage of Columbus to the New World, he stopped at Gomera, one of the Canary Islands, on October 5, 1493, to take on wood and water. Here he purchased calves, goats and sheep to stock the islands of Hispanola, Cuba and Panama. The livestock were landed in the middle of December, 1493, when was founded the first Christian city of the New World, Isabella.

After Cortez's conquest of Mexico, and his return to Spain, from whence he came again to the City of Mexico in 1530, a misunderstanding between him and the magistrate caused him to leave and take up his residence in the City of Cuernavaca on the southern slope of the Cordilleras. He imported large numbers of Merino sheep, and from Panama and the City of Cuernavaca went forth sheep in great numbers.

Much woven cloth was made in New Spain in 1560, and these Spanish sheep were the progenitors of the vast herds

of Mexico, New Mexico, Utah and Texas. Of all the continental breeds of medium tailed sheep, as distinct from fat tailed (Palestine) and long tailed sheep, the best known and the most cultivated is the Merino, originally a native of Spain. In the latter part of the 18th century the Spanish flocks produced more wool than the factories of the country could make up, and the surplus was sold and exported.

Merinos Predominate.

Through breeding certain tendencies are suppressed, others exaggerated, and under natural wild conditions there is no occasion for a ten-pound fleece. In 1786 the French government imported from Spain 383 selected Spanish Merinos. These sheep were kept at Ramboulette. Careful breeding and liberal feeding greatly improved their mutton form. Both the weight of the fleece and the weight of the carcasses have been increased from 100 to 150 pounds over the old Spanish Merino. This breed has not been specially prominent in the United States until the last 20 years. Full grown rams of this breed will weigh up to 225 pounds, ewes 175 pounds. The American Ramboulette Sheep Breeders' Association was organized at Pontiac, Michigan, in 1889. The number registered in 1906 was 34,075. Baron von Homyer, in Germany, bred from some French Ramboulette. Sheep from this flock, brought to the United States in the '80s and '90s, are widely distributed. The International Von Homyer Ramboulette Club have about 300 registered sheep. There are more Merinos in the United States than all the other breeds combined. Twenty-five years ago they constituted nearly 95 per cent of the flocks of the United States. A decline in the price of wool, a growing taste for mutton, and at this date, 1908, the Merino does not make up more than 75 per cent of the flocks of the U. S.

The American Merino.

Is one of the smallest breeds of the United States. The ewes at maturity weigh from 90 to 125 pounds; the bucks in good condition, from 140 to 175 pounds, while the fleece weighs from 10 to 15 pounds. It is the hardest sheep in the U. S. and can be herded in flocks of thousands, while mutton breeds cannot be handled in flocks of over 200. Of the various breeds produced by crossing, we have the Delaine Merino, the Standard, the National and the Improved Merino. Related in their leading characteristics are the Blacktop Spanish Merino, the Imported Blacktop Merino and the Dickenson. All Delaine Merinos have horns and more or less wrinkles or folds about the neck and breast. Blacktop Merinos have horns, but no wrinkles, and their fleeces is more black. Dickenson, or polled Merinos, have neither horns nor wrinkles. Mexican Merinos are descendants of Spanish flocks and have been bred in Mexico without cross or improvement for 200 years. The New Mexico Merinos, graded up from Old Mexico ewes and American Merino rams, are the stock of which the New Mexico and southern Colorado flocks are composed.

From a review of these facts of history, and a review of the figures given, it is easily seen that the Ramboulette, or French branch of the Merino family, is very much the most profitable all-around combination of the three nations who lead in number of sheep. For fine wool Australia leads the world. 1910, Australia (all breeds) 92,047,015 1908, Argentine Republic (all breeds) 67,211,754 1909, United States (all breeds) 57,206,000

False Economy.

Farmers and feeders make a great mistake when they cut down on the amount of grain food that they feed their fattening animals during the winter. There may be some animals on the farm which can be carried along through the winter on moderate rations, but fattening stock and dairy cows do not belong to that class.

The farm teams that are not being worked do not require a full ration of grain food during the winter, but it is costly economy to "rough" them during the winter on short rations. The horse that is allowed to run down in flesh condition during the winter can-

not do as efficient service during the spring's work as he could if he were fed well during the winter. No man ever made money feeding livestock just enough to keep them alive.

In feeding fattening stock and dairy cows, gain and profit come in proportion to the amount of food the animals put to good use. The fattening animals and dairy cows should have no setbacks; and the best feeders are the ones who know when to feed high-priced grains and are not afraid to feed full rations.

Warding Off Milk Fever.

Cows may come down with milk fever during any season of the year on new green grass as well as on winter feed, but the attacks are most common in winter and spring, before turning on grass. One attack makes a cow prone to a second, but that may be warded off by ample exercise and light, laxative rations during the last two months of pregnancy. The cow should be dried off at least six weeks before calving. Feed plenty of bran and flaxseed meal to keep the bowels freely open and make the cow take outdoor exercise every day. Milk the affected teats three times a day, massaging the quarters thoroughly at each milking time, and at night rub thoroughly with a mixture of one part each of fluid extract of pokeroot and belladonna leaves and six parts of warm melted lard or sweet oil.

Watering Cows.

Where water is before cows constantly it is interesting to note how often they will take a few swallows then go ahead with eating or chewing cud, says Hoard's Dairyman. It would be hard to estimate the benefit of having water before the cows in winter when it is warmed to the temperature of even a cold barn over the system of turning cows out to drink once or twice a day from a tank that is too often frozen, or even if the water is fairly warm the atmosphere is too cold for cow comfort, and she is compelled to drink far too much at one time, thereby chilling her and diverting energy that should be used in making milk to bringing her temperature up to normal.

When the farmer understands that the last strippings of a dairy cow are over 500 per cent richer in cream than the first few pulls he may be a little more thorough in his work during the milking hour.

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