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COMMERCIAL POSSIBILITIES OF THE ANGORA GOAT

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Goats and ibexes are of the same genus. Closely resembling each other in some points, they are yet of distinct types. Wild goats of the Pyrenees mountains between Spain and France are of the ibexes. The largest and handsomest of wild goats are found in Central Asia. It is from these animals that the modern goat was derived. The bibliography of the goat is confined to few volumes, but naturalists and other authorities on the subject apparently agree that the goat is of earlier origin than the sheep.

Two general designations distinguish one from the other: capra (goat) and ovis (sheep). He who tries to trace back the origin of each species find himself lost in bewildering attempts at fixation of type, and scientists are not lucid on the line of descent, except that most agree that the goat of today originated in the wild type of mountain-climbing goat whose habitat was between the Black Sea and the Himalayas. It seems probable that all goats of today were evolved from a common and very remote ancestral stock.

The mohair goats of Armenia are considered to have resulted from interbreeding various types of goats, the Karadistan goat being crossed upon the smaller and finer haired goat of the Angora district, in order to secure more body in the animal and more weight and strength in the fleece.

Domestic or milking goats are considered to have originated likewise from the wild goat (capra Aegagrus), although the Encyclopedia Britannica says: "Considerable diversity of opinion has been expressed by naturalists as to the original stock of the domestic goat, which is met with in nearly every quarter of the globe—the now prevalent and most probable conclusion being that the various domestic breeds are descended from wild stock now extinct."

It is reasonable to conclude from the foregoing that the various breeds of domestic goats have come down to the present from the Persian wild goat. Breeding has been conducted in the various countries of Europe with a view to increasing desirable characteristics in domestic goats.

The goat has been one of the most important domestic animals in Asia and Europe for centuries, yet we on this side of the Atlantic have been reluctant

to understand the real worth of this little producer.

Commercial development of the possibilities in mohair growing, however, is rapidly removing this neglect, and the goat is becoming recognized as one of the important and productive farm animals in the Americas. Mexico has for years been utilizing goats for milk supply, but has given no attention to breeding for mohair or improving the quality of the stock. On the other hand with less than four hundred head of imported stock to build upon, North America has increased its Angora flocks to several millions. South America has little but common stock though herds are extensive. Canada has been rapidly increasing the number of goats on the farms and in domestic surroundings. It may therefore be expected that the goat is at last coming to be recognized generally in the Americas as it has been long valued in the Old World.

Angora goat culture in the United States has been carried on commercially in the western states since 1890. Original importations came to this country as early as 1849. In 1848 the Sultan of Turkey presented nine pure-bred Angoras from the best flocks in Asia to Dr. J. B. Davis, who had been sent as a diplomatic representative from the Ottoman empire. These were the first goats imported to the United States. Subsequent breeding flocks of small numbers were brought at intervals thereafter up to 1893, when the industry may be said to have become somewhat established. Later importations have been of small numbers and there have been scarcely any Angoras brought to this country recently, the latest noted being in 1899. Embargo was placed on exportation from South Africa and the Sultan of Turkey made it an offense punishable by death to take Angoras out of his empire.

In spite of this fact, one Californian, a young physician, Dr. W. C. Bailey, risked his life in the early nineties and brought out a few goats at great expense.

Rigid quarantine regulations by the United States Bureau of Animal Industry are maintained to prevent diseased animals being brought to this country, but under proper inspection and detention, this obstacle is not a hopeless detriment, and it may be practicable in future to secure infusion of new blood into

to American flocks.

Game hunters have found the Rocky mountain goat one of the most elusive and most difficult animals to secure. It inhabits the higher regions of the backbone of the continent and, while belonging to the goat species, is individual and may be classed as sub-species. Its woolly fleece is softer than that of the common or short-haired goat, but is characterized by long straight hair. There is found under the hair a close coat of fine white wool. Some breeders have suggested a cross of this goat on the Angora, but it has been impossible to secure bucks of this species. If there are any in captivity, the writer has no knowledge of them.

It has been stated that Angoras were first kept as household pets, and derived gentleness from this method of domestication. The beauty and silkiness of their fleece induced the women of the household to weave fabrics of the hair, and to use it for cushions, pillows and beds, before it became a staple for commercial purposes.

Today the principal uses for mohair are for car-seat plush upholstery, tapestries, auto robes, auto tops and dress goods. The list of other purposes for which it is available and employed is very large and the yarns spun from Angora fleece are the most beautiful obtainable.

Industrially considered, goats are productive of mohair, milk, meat and skins. Even the long straight hair of the milk goat is utilized commercially.

Their value as browsers and land-clearers has been proved, although the mistake has been made of thinking Angoras capable of getting their own living without food or shelter in severe weather and losses have resulted, with consequent impression that goats were unprofitable stock on a brush range farm.

Given the average care accorded to sheep, however, they have been found equally productive. Good sheds should

be provided where long snow periods are experienced, and feeding is essential when snow covers the ground.

Goats flesh is generally undistinguishable from mutton of the sheep, and large quantities are supplied annually and absorbed in the markets of the United States without creating any adverse comment, or even being recognized as goat meat. In fact its agreeable taste and high food value render it in no way inferior to sheep meat. Increasing quantities are marketed each year. Young does or wethers prepared before the age of five years are excellent. Kid meat is superior to lamb in tender and juicy quality. Goat meat is procurable in many portions of the globe where other meat is not.

The Angora is a pioneer, in the sense that it goes ahead of other live stock and clears the way for pasture and seed crops. In many new countries settlement would have been impossible without the goat.

In the Southwestern States large flocks of Angoras are maintained, Texas having nearly as many goats as sheep on its ranges. Fifteen thousand in the Arizona county were sheared in 1917.

The Department of Agriculture has published several farmer's bulletins on the subject of Angoras, that numbered 573 being the most useful. The branch of this department having the forest service in hand is keeping special grazing examiners in the field studying flock management, methods of care and breeding, grazing on forest areas, elimination of marauding animals, restocking of grazed brush lands to maintain permanent range, and offers the forests for use of the stockman, under certain regulations, restrictions and with a moderate fee for grazing.

This service also contemplates extension of the employment of goat meat as food to supplement the supply of other kinds. It is not desired to have the brush cleared in this work, nor the forests overgrazed, but it does want to

A Sample of the Raw Product



Long Mohair fleece grown on an Oregon Angora goat. Staple of length over 20 inches often sells above \$20 a pound.

which many of the earliest importations of Asiatic and South African stock have been continuously recorded.

Growers are united in the National Mohair Growers' Association, Laguna, Texas, a marketing and promotion organization of large membership and wide influence.

Canada has given official recognition to the industry by authorizing formation of the Canadian Goat Society with headquarters at Ottawa. British Columbia has a goat society at Victoria. Many states have organized associations for betterment of the industry in the past few years and countries are forming local branches to forward Angora goat enterprises.

The goat is a clean feeder and a profitable domestic animal. There is as much difference between the common goat and the modern purebred as there is between the oldtime Texas longhorn and the modern purebred Hereford. Economic administration of the American farm will adopt this little animal more generally as time passes.

Goat farming holds opportunity for profitable investment, because its growth has been substantial and in no sense ephemeral. The increasing demand for stock cannot be fully supplied, and will not be adequately filled for many years.

Counting all classes of goats there are approximately 120,000,000 in the world under human control. Of the wild life of the goat little is known, as it inhabits the most inaccessible mountain heights. It is wary, elusive and consequently hard to meet. It is at home on rocky elevations where no men could find footing. Cases have been noted where Angora herds have been separated, the stragglers going to the summit of rocky hills where they lay in the sunshine for days and only descended at last for water and salt. Western foresters have supplied game to the hunter in the form of goats strayed from the flocks of farmers adjacent. The instinct of wild life returns to the animal species when liberated or escaped from the flocks.

The Rocky mountain, Olympic and Cascade ranges of mountains in the northwest have absorbed many valuable animals now occasionally brought down by the hunter, who considers he has secured a repeat equal to venison when he gets a young kid or doe of tender years by his facility with the rifle.

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