SHEEP FOR THE FARMER.

J. H. DIXON, Brandon, Wis.

It is a fact well known by every observing person that as a rule dairy, beef and sheep-breeding sections are less exhausted and the people more prosperous than where grain growing is practiced, and if properly done, raising this class of stock is not only profitable, but actually makes the farm grow better. There are conditions imperatively essential to dairying that do not exist in sheep husbandry, so all will not be dairymen or beefmen either. To those who do not wish to follow dairying or beef production, sheep husbandry affords a profitable solution to the problem.

Wisconsin for Sheep.

I see no reason why Wisconsin should not rank with the first States in the Union in the production of high-class mutton and wool. In the first place, we have the natural surroundings, plenty of good water and grazing lands. We can raise all varieties of foodstuffs necessary for their best development, and last, but not least, we have undoubtedly as intelligent a lot of farmers in Wisconsin as can be found in any State in the Union. To verify these statements I only need refer you to the sheep awards at the leading State Fairs and the Chicago International of 1900, also to the Chicago lamb and sheep markets, which have often been topped by Wisconsin feeders and shippers.

The breeding and feeding of sheep is a fine art, and the ability to breed animals with more merit than their immediate parents is a gift that few men possess. Of course none of us like to be told that we lack this ability, but nevertheless such is the case.

A Word to Breeders.

Breeders should aim to breed the kind of sheep that will make the most mutton and wool on the least food, and in the shortest time. When sheep are bred for mere fancy points, and when

cook corn and get good results, because it is more digestible, but when you go to feeding all cooked food to hogs, it is too much diluted with water; they can't get the proper amount of food to get the best results, so that at the Stations where they have cooked food they did not get nearly as good results as where they use partly cooked and partly uncooked food.

Question—What proportion of oats and peas do you sow in a pasture?

Mr. Convey—We started with about half a bushel of peas to a sack of oats, but we found that our land couldn't stand that much. They would lodge. We do not sow a bushel of oats now without sowing peas with it. It is better for the land, and better food material for any class of stock that you raise, especially for hogs.
constitution, substance and vitality are lost sight of, they cease to be profitable assimilators of food, and are not what practical sheepmen want. The ultimate end of all sheep is the stockyard or the butcher's block, and the animal that gets there with the greatest profit to the man who feeds him is the kind that will win in the long run.

We must not forget the practical side of the question. Breeders of stud flocks too often lose sight of this. Most people breed and feed sheep for the stockyard; those who do not are the exception, not the rule. The breeding and mating season seems to be the one that is filled with important and anxious results. The influence of a single ram goes down through the flock for generations. He may leave his mark of excellence or give us work in weeding out, year by year, his faulty descendants, and as the ram is conceded to be half the flock, we cannot too highly emphasize the possibilities for improvement or degeneracy involved in the selection of a ram. Of course a perfect ram cannot cover the defects of a poor mother. Constitution, appetite and milk are necessary in the ewe for bringing up a good lamb.

My Methods.

I will now give you some of my methods of caring for them. My sheep have a yard of their own. I separate into as small flocks as convenient, as they do enough better to pay for the trouble.

Clover is the model hay for sheep, but I have had good results with good corn fodder. Timothy and marsh hay are fairly good if cut early and supplemented with a heavier grain ration. My grain ration is usually bran, oats and corn, according to their relative cost, time of year, kind of sheep, and for what purpose they are being fed. This grain ration is placed in troughs in the yard, and usually once a day. During the middle of the day they get cornstalks or shredded cornstalks in the yard. I feed hay twice a day in the barn, in racks with bottoms in them, and to prevent the accumulation of chaff and dirt in the fleece we always feed when the sheep are out. I never allow them access to hay or straw stacks and always keep plenty of good water and salt before them.

Thus fed and cared for during the winter, they should come to spring or lambing season in good shape. I always save some of my best hay and corn fodder until then, as it is the worst time in the year to scrimp sheep. If there is any time of the year when breeding ewes should have extra care it is then. Another reason is that from the middle of March to grass time they are more apt to get off feed and hence more dainty about what they eat. During this season I feed plenty of bran, roots or potatoes, and their grain ration I feed twice a day.

The Lamb.

I always tag or shear my sheep before turning to pasture or before lambing season, as it saves a great deal of trouble in starting the lambs. I usually have my lambs come from the middle of March to May 1. See that every lamb gets started; if the ewe has not enough milk at first, feed the lamb a few times with warm milk from a bottle. Have a lamb creep where they may go in or out at will. Place clean feed in it every day; a little feed stimulates the digestive machinery and so creates more appetite. More appetite means more feed, consequently more growth. In other words, early maturity is due to the cultivation of the appetite from the beginning of the life of a lamb.

Shearing.

To get back to the shearing question again, I say, take the wool off just as soon as the weather seems settled and warm enough to admit of it with safety to the sheep. The practice of shearing before turning to pasture is fast coming into favor, at least in my locality. It makes it much easier to start the lambs, the wool is much whiter and cleaner, and hence more salable, and the sheep do better than if allowed to run until June. By this method sheep do better, feel more comfortable and are a great deal less troublesome than by the old method.

This is also the best time to cut out, as you can readily see which are inferior in fleece and as breeders. Mark them so you will readily know them when selling time comes. Do your own selecting, always keeping the best. They are worth as much to you as to anyone else, so long as you are not overstocked.
After sheep are sheared and turned to pasture with shade, pure water and salt, they need but little attention, though that little is necessary until about the first of August, when the lambs should be weaned and placed in a field away from their mothers. This field should contain the best feed possible. Put the ewes in as dry pasture as you have for a few days, at least, in order to dry them up. I always strip them out two or three times so as to make sure none are spoiled. Afterward give as good feed as convenient.

nips. The same season I grew rape with as good success. In '98 it proved almost a failure. In '99 I had good feed. In 1900 or the past season, I had an abundance of feed again. There is no feed that will make sheep gain as fast and as cheap. In this way a flock owner can have his sheep in good condition to enter winter quarters and his lambs fat enough for market any day you wish to sell. In addition to this keep them out of all heavy rainstorms after the first of September, and you will be surprised to see how much better they will do and look.

Fall Feed.

In order to get good fall feed for sheep I sow clover, rape and turnip seed in all my small grain in the spring, and if I do not get good feed it is because of an unusually poor season for such. I have practiced this method for the past four years. In 1897 I had eleven acres of barley sown in this way, producing over forty bushels to the acre, and afterwards probably 160 bushels per acre of flat tur-

The old saying that "A sheep well wintered is half summered" is a true one.

A Few Suggestions.

Do not keep more sheep than you have first-class arrangements for. Do not make "airship" calculations and then quarrel with the sheep because your dreams are not realized. Do not depend too much upon tariffs or anything outside of your own judgment and energy to increase your income.
from the flock. Do not abandon sheep husbandry because prices are temporarily unsatisfactory, or jump head over heels to expand your business when a boom sets in. Wool and mutton, like everything else, will vary in price, and the changes in price will come faster than any man can change his business without sacrifice.

I have just one thought more. When my fellow farmers are thinking of engaging in some line of stock husbandry which may be pursued with pleasure and profit that should reward honest labor, free from many objec-

TWO-YEAR OLD OXFORD DOWN RAM.
From Photograph by Webster. First Prize winner at leading American shows, and a winner at the English Royal of 1901. Weight over 400 lbs. Owned by Geo. McKerrow & Sons, Sussex, Wis.

tions that may be urged against most other lines of livestock husbandry, one in which manual labor is comparatively light, with many hours and even days that may be devoted wholly or in part to other work, rest, recreation, social entertainment, or intellectual pursuits, in short, when a man is looking for a business that will be likely to bring him in close contact with comfort and happiness on earth and better fit him for enjoying the happiness of an endless hereafter, he will look long and anxiously before he finds one better adapted to such ends than that of sheep husbandry. Yes, the sheep, that useful animal, proclaims its own worth, its snowy fleece and majestic carcass add beauty to hillside and valley, and gold to the shepherd’s purse.

DISCUSSION.

Mr. Culbertson—What do you use for your first green feed in the spring?

Mr. Dixon—I have clover that they can run on first, before I plant my corn.

Mr. Culbertson—Have you ever tried rye?

Mr. Dixon—No, I have not.

Mr. Culbertson—I like rye very much; it is the first food we have in the spring.

Question—What kind of sheep do you prefer to raise?

Mr. Dixon—Whatever I can sell the best. I started in two or three years ago with Shrops, and they sell well. Other breeds sell just as well.
Question—Would you advise to start in with high-grade stock?

Mr. Dixon—No, I wouldn’t advise that; I would advise a man to start in with the best he had and get a good mutton ram.

Question—Suppose he had Merinos.

Mr. Dixon—I would start in with a Merino foundation.

Mr. Convey—Do you consider Cotswold of the best mutton type?

Mr. Dixon—No, I don’t. I think the Southdown or Shropshire is better.

The Chairman—What is the matter with Cotswold mutton?

Mr. Dixon—I don’t know that there is anything the matter with the mutton. It is not as salable. It is more leggy and not always of that nice, firm condition that the Southdown or Shropshire has. They never command the best Chicago price, they don’t look as plump and nice. I never raised any. My observation is that they are not as good as the others.

Mr. Bradley—What time do you have your lambs come?

Mr. Dixon—From the middle of March to the first of May.

Mr. Bradley—When do you sell your lambs?

Mr. Dixon—Understand that I am not breeding for the lamb market; that is the Chicago market. I keep pure-bred sheep mostly, and of course we have to keep the males until they are a year old, usually, that is, with Merinos and Shropshires, high-grade lambs, I sell in the fall, September and October, or whenever I get the best price.

Mr. Bradley—What do you use to fatten those lambs?

Mr. Dixon—Rape, and turnips and clover, the aftergrowth in the stubble.

Mr. Bradley—Do you feed any grain to these lambs?

Mr. Dixon—Usually I do not.

Mr. Goodrich—Do you take special pains to breed sheep that will shear large fleeces of wool?

Mr. Dixon—For the mutton sheep, mutton is the first consideration, the fleece second, and the tendency is that way with the Merino sheep.

Mr. Goodrich—Well, the best mutton sheep don’t have the heaviest fleece; that looks reasonable. If a sheep turns her food into wool, she can’t use the same food to make meat. Now, which do you prefer, that the sheep should turn their food into wool or into meat?

Mr. Dixon—As I said, meat is the first consideration, but we have those that consume their food so it goes both directions.

Supt. McKerrow—Then you believe in dual-purpose sheep?

Mr. Dixon—Yes, to a certain extent.

Supt. McKerrow—What kind of food do you feed your lambs in the summer?

Mr. Dixon—We hardly ever feed grain in the summer.

Supt. McKerrow—Ought you not to?

Mr. Dixon—Yes, possibly.

Supt. McKerrow—Isn’t that the time to feed them?

Mr. Dixon—They will make the most gain then, I will admit. If a person will provide plenty of good rape and turnips and clover, there is nothing that will make gain so cheaply and fast as that food, and I don’t think it is necessary to feed but very little grain at that time.

Supt. McKerrow—Wouldn’t you get a good price for your grain if you fed a little at that time.

Mr. Dixon—Yes, I think it would be all right.

Mr. Bradley—How do you feed your breeding ewes during the winter?

Mr. Dixon—Well, I feed hay twice a day, corn fodder, or shredded corn fodder, once a day, my grain ration I feed once or twice a day, and my grain ration consists of oats and bran and corn, according to the kind of sheep I am feeding it to, and the purpose for which I am feeding it.

Mr. Arnold—What kind of hay do you prefer.

Mr. Dixon—I prefer clover hay. If I can’t get that, I will take the next best thing I have, which is corn fodder.

Mr. Arnold—You spoke in favor of early shearing. There is one objection to that. The fleece is not as heavy, would we get as much more for the fleece by shearing early and having less weight? I was talking with a man who is feeding five thousand sheep, and he shears them right in the winter, and the second day turns them out in the yard. He says they gain faster, not only in the growth of wool, but in flesh, than with the fleece on. I think it is very desirable that we should shear early, if possible. I
would like to hear from the gentleman about this.

Mr. Dixon—I do not advocate as early shearing as some people, but any time after the first of April, when the weather is good. If we should advocate shearing any earlier, lots of people would go home and try it, and lose some sheep. If you shear any time after the first of April, when the weather is good, your sheep will do better, they are more active, and you can raise the lambs more easily. If you do have to sacrifice a little in the price of your wool, you can save enough more lambs to make up for it. At least, that is my experience and the experience of every one of my neighbors.

Mr. Arnold—We have lambs coming this time of year and the little fellows run out in the yard and seem to be perfectly comfortable with very little wool on. I don’t know why the old sheep cannot stand that as much as the little ones.

Supt. McKerrow—A good dairy cow that is giving a full mess of milk cannot stand as much cold as if she were not. Of course it is different where you take a lot of sheep that are not producing lambs, that are being fed for meat, that is a different thing. Experiments have been carried on where they shear lambs in the fall of the year, and the results went to show that there was not much gain, but in my own experience I think, if they are free from ticks, they will do practically as well with the fleece on until the weather becomes quite warm, about the first of May. That is early enough shearing unless it is for the show ring. I won’t tell how early we shear for that.

Mr. Goodrich—Your sheep have long wool by lambing time?

Supt. McKerrow—Yes, we raise a sheep that grows pretty long wool.

Mr. Arnold—Are you an importer, Mr. Dixon?

Mr. Dixon—No, sir, I am not.

Mr. Arnold—You said if you couldn’t get hay you would use corn stover. Now, corn stover is very fattening food, and clover is protein food. How do you account for it that sheep will do so well on that kind of a ration? Isn’t it a fact that the leaves of corn have about as much protein in them as clover?

Mr. Dixon—There is more protein in the leaves of corn than in the stalks. If you feed a cow one hundred pounds of corn leaves a day, she will get enough protein to get a full milk flow, and she will have to eat a hundred and fifty pounds of stalks to get a full milk flow.

Mr. Arnold—And yet we are talking all the time that corn fodder is not a good milk-producing food, whereas if you keep corn fodder so they don’t have to eat anything but the leaves, it is a good food.

Mr. Bradley—are February and March lambs as subject to troubles as May and June lambs?

Mr. Dixon—I don’t know as they are, but I can’t raise as good a lamb, that is, a lamb that will develop as symmetrically, as nice a mutton form. It costs too much to raise a February lamb. I haven’t a silo, and with the feed that I have, I can’t do as well as to have my lambs come after the middle of March.

Mr. Culbertson—Sometimes the lamb crop is quite weakly. Can you tell us how to have them stronger?

Mr. Dixon—Well, I should judge that your flock had not been properly handled and fed.

The Chairman—Is not exercise an important element with breeding ewes?

Mr. Dixon—Exercise, fresh air, sunlight, and plenty of good food are necessary in the ewe flock.

Question—in feeding from the bottle, how much do you feed at a meal?

Mr. Dixon—that depends on the age of the lamb. The young lamb, for the first day or two, should have but very little, and that little often.

Mr. Culbertson—Don’t you think that succulent food all winter would cause lambs to be stronger?

Mr. Dixon—I don’t know as it would unless the ewes had plenty of exercise.

Supt. McKerrow—All other things being equal, a reasonable amount of succulent food will give you a better lot of lambs.

Mr. Convey—I wish we might have Supt. McKerrow’s opinion as to ensilage.

Supt. McKerrow—Good ensilage is good sheep feed, if you don’t feed too much of it nor too little. From one-third to one-half of their coarse ration
in corn silage gives good results. Of course, when you are feeding corn silage, you must feed a little more protein food in the form of hay, or if your flock is not up in flesh, you can feed them some oats and some bran. Too much ensilage causes a derangement of the digestive organs; the trouble with feeding too little is that they don't do as well as they would if they had enough. Good, sweet ensilage you can feed twice a day, although with average ensilage I would say one feed a day, what they will eat up clean in an hour's time, is about right.

Mr. Convey—About how many pounds?

Supt. McKerrow—Well, sir, I couldn't tell you, but I should judge about three, just an estimate.

Question—What causes goitre in lambs?

Supt. McKerrow—I have been trying a long time to find out. I knew more about it twenty years ago than I do now, so I will not answer that question. I have a suspicion that on a ration containing too much protein, lack of exercise cuts a good deal of figure. In my own experience and in my own observation, I never have seen December and January lambs, and but very few February lambs, that were goitred. The ewe flocks have plenty of exercise in the fall of the year, and therefore I think exercise cuts a figure there. I know of one flock in this State where a gentleman lost thirty-one of these lambs were being dropped in April or May, and he kept losing them. At last he tried January lambs, and he had not a goitred lamb among them. He is positive that exercise cuts the figure, and that early lambs are all right. He says now when he gets an occasional late lamb, it is very apt to be goitred. There are some people who think it is caused quite largely by the hard condition of the water, but I know of cases where they had goitred lambs and the water was rain water, cistern water. I don't think we know a great deal about it, but I am inclined to think that lack of exercise is one of the chief causes or promoters of the trouble.

Mr. Bradley—It seems to me there is another thing we ought to consider, and that is the difference in the kind of food that the sheep have in the early winter, and in carrying the lamb crop clear to April or May. She has a good deal of dry food into April.

Supt. McKerrow—I think some of the trouble is that in order to develop the lamb, the sheep have too much protein, the object has been to develop muscle and bone as fast as possible, and I think we should be careful about giving the succulent food. However, I may be wrong; I don't know anything about it, I only theorize along this line.

Question—Is goitre as prevalent as it was a few years ago?

Mr. Dixon—As far as I know it is.

Mr. Imrie—Which do you consider better for sheep, whole or cut ensilage?

Supt. McKerrow—I like whole ensilage better, because it is sweeter than cut at the same stage and put in the silo. If you are going to put it in whole, you must put it in earlier. But your sheep won't eat it as close as cut ensilage. For sheep-feeding I am sure I like the whole ensilage best, because you can feed more of it without any bad effects.

Mr. Matteson—Wouldn't you have more waste by feeding the sweet ensilage?

Supt. McKerrow—No, I think about the same. Where you put in the small corn they will eat it up pretty clean.

Mr. Arnold—There is a great tendency to feed sheep timothy hay. Now, my experience is that timothy hay is pretty sure death to the lambs, if not to the ewes. If fed exclusively. I have always had good success with sheep except one year when I fed timothy hay, and since then I think it is pretty dangerous food.

Question—At what stage of growth do you cut your timothy hay?

Mr. Arnold—I am aware of the great variety of protein elements in timothy hay according to the time when it is cut, and whether it is on high land or low land, but early-cut timothy hay is certainly the best for sheep, while later cut is better for some other animals, but as timothy hay is generally cut it is dangerous food for sheep.

A Member—It is a good food, if it is cut early enough before it gets dry and woody.

The Institute adjourned till 7:30 p.m. same day.