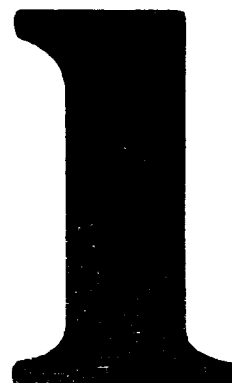


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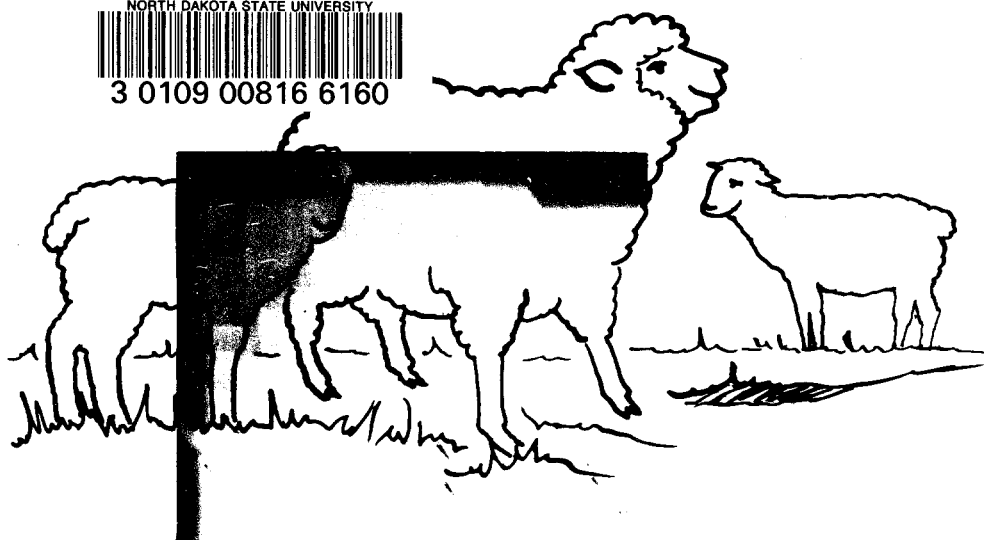
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Sheep Raising *in* North Dakota



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**STARTING A
EWE FLOCK...**

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You CAN USUALLY MAKE MONEY RAISING SHEEP in NORTH DAKOTA

They provide a fast return for your money. The investment is small, and you get two sources of income every year--lambs and wool. Sheep thrive on many of the roughage feeds produced on the farm, and only inexpensive housing and feeding equipment is needed.

Sheep production is not, and probably should not be, a major enterprise on most farms. The best plan is to keep a farm flock as part of a diversified livestock production program.

GOOD SHEEP Climate

North Dakota's climate is especially favorable to sheep. The dry cold winters, light rainfall, and freedom from long periods of hot sultry weather in summer are good for sheep production. Also high quality fleeces are produced, and higher condition of finish can be obtained than is possible in warmer, more humid climates.

ESTABLISHING A Flock

Late summer or early fall is your most favorable time to start with sheep. Ewes can be obtained more readily at this time, and can be kept on meadows, stubblefields, or late-sown forage crops to get them in good condition for breeding. Experience gained in handling ewes during the fall and winter makes a beginner more capable of caring for them at lambing time. It is usually difficult to buy bred ewes at reasonable prices.

Size of Flock

The size of your flock generally determines your profit. If your feed supply and equipment is not sufficient to care for a flock of 40 to 50 ewes it is best not to go into the sheep business. Smaller flocks of ewes are seldom cared for properly, because the cost of care is greater than the cash return. Forty to 50 ewes justify the purchase of a good ram, and makes it worthwhile to build pens and equipment.

Selecting the Ewes

The useful age of a breeding ewe usually does not exceed 6 to 7 years. Yearlings and two-year-old ewes are more valuable. There are times, however, when old ewes can be bought cheap enough to be profitable for the production of one lamb crop. Age of the sheep can be estimated by examining the teeth. Until a sheep is 4 years old its age can usually be told within a few months. The lambs have small, narrow teeth, known as milk teeth. At about 12 months of age the two center incisors are replaced by two large, broad, permanent teeth. At about 24 months two more large teeth appear, one on each side of the other pair. Another pair appears at 3 years of age, and the last, or corner teeth, at about the end of the fourth year. The sheep then has a full mouth. Heavy or light feeding has considerable effect upon the exact time of appearance. After a sheep is 4 years old, its exact age can only be estimated. As age advances, the adult teeth usually become shorter and the distance between them increases. The normal number of teeth may be retained until the sheep is 8 or 9 years old, but more often some are lost after the fifth year.

Weight OF LAMBS

The market wants lambs that finish at an early age at weights from 80 to 100 pounds. In general, a low-set, level-backed, wide, deep-bodied ewe of moderate size produces such lambs. Large, long-legged, rangy ewes produce slow maturing lambs that are over weight when fat. Small ewes tend to produce lambs that are not heavy enough to bring top prices at market time.

Fleece

An important part of the income from a farm flock is obtained from the wool the ewes produce. A tight fleece is good protection against cold, wet weather. Ewes with heavy fleece of uniform quality are more valuable than ewes with poor quality light fleece.

Health AND Vigor

Ewes that have good health and vigor appear active and alert. Parasites and under-feeding frequently cause an unthrifty condition which reduces the value of the ewe for breeding. Select ewes with deep wide chests, strong heads, heavy bone, and healthy looking skin and fleece. Also look for ewes that have a soft, pliable udder with two sound teats.

SELECTING THE Ram

A purebred ram should always head the flock. A purebred may cost a little more, but he will pay for himself with the increased value of his first lamb crop.

Breed is not as important as is the selection of the ram that will sire the right kind of market lambs, and build up a quality ewe flock. Purebred rams sire more uniform lambs than grade or scrub rams. A purebred ram is half of the flock, and a great deal of care should be taken in his selection.

Too many flock owners buy a ram because he can be purchased from a nearby farm, or because he is large, or because the price is low. A far-sighted shepherd starts looking for a ram several months before he needs one, and when a number of quality purebred rams are available. The shepherd knows the defects in his ewe-flock and attempts to buy a ram that is strong where the ewes are weak. A flock of wool-type ewes should be bred to a mutton-type ram if all the lambs are to be marketed, or if it is desired to grade up a flock of mutton-type ewes. A flock of mutton-type ewes should be crossed with wool-type rams only when it is desired to breed up a flock of wool-type ewes by saving the ewe lambs raised. Many suggestions for selecting ewes apply to the selection of a ram. Yearlings are more active and vigorous than older rams and have a higher sale value after two years of use. A good ram purchased from a reliable breeder at a fair price is always a good investment. A poor ram is costly at any price. It is a common practice to use one ram, a yearling or older, for each 35 to 40 ewes.

Buildings FOR EWE FLOCK

Winter quarters need not be elaborate, but should be roomy, dry and free from draft. If the doors to the barn are on a side away from the prevailing winds, they should be left open at all times. Sheep in full fleece will do better if not confined too closely. Doors to the sheep barn should be large to avoid crowding, and injury to pregnant ewes. For ewes bred to lamb after

they go on pasture, ten square feet of floor space per ewe is sufficient. For lambs that are born in winter quarters fifteen square feet of floor space per ewe should be provided.

FEEDING Equipment

While only simple equipment is required for handling or feeding breeding ewes, the fleece should be kept free from dirt and foreign material. Provide 15 to 18 inches of rack space per ewe to avoid crowding. A rack having solid sides will prevent grain or chaff from getting into the fleece.

It is unwise and expensive to feed breeding ewes so that they are really fat at lambing time. They will have more difficulty in lambing, and may produce weak lambs.