

SECOND BIENNIAL REPORT

OF THE

Oklahoma Territorial Board  
of Agriculture

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C. A. McNABB  
SECRETARY

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GUTHRIE, OKLAHOMA  
STATE CAPITAL COMPANY  
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## SHEEP IN THE SOUTHWEST.

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At the present time the sheep industry in this country is in a very prosperous condition. This is the result of natural causes which have been operating for about ten years and it is likely that these same causes will continue to further the profits from the industry for some years more. The demand for lamb has led to the development of the mutton side of the industry within the years mentioned. The production of good lamb has increased the appetite of it on the consumer and during the past ten years the trade has prospered proportionately. This demand for lamb has operated so as to keep down the number of breeding sheep. When a man can sell a fat lamb for \$6.00 he is going to sacrifice it even if it is a ewe lamb that should go into his flock, when he could turn around and buy a maturing breeding ewe for half that price. The great demand for lamb on the market and the constant sacrifice of ewe lambs to supply this has operated to cut down the number of breeding sheep in the country. Then again the vast settlement of lands which were given over to the grazing of sheep by farmers has also operated to hold ranching in check. The fact that the breeding sheep which were producing the lambs which have been selling for most on the market have also produced the fleeces that bring the most money because of the demand for medium combing wool, has operated to make the prosperous growth, which has taken place, a steady and legitimate one.

I do not believe that we will ever see again the serious depressions in the live stock industry, particularly in sheep, that have occurred in the past. For I do not believe that it is possible for any line of the live stock industry to again make the stupendous growth and rapid increase that were possible in the past. I never expect to see good breeding sheep sell for fifty cents a head as they did in our leading market a little over a decade ago. I believe that the industry is now on a good basis and that it will be exceptionally profitable for some years in the future

though I can hardly hope that prices will continue to be as favorable to the producer as they have been during recent years.

But the profits may be greatly reduced from what they are at present and yet the sheep prove profitable, provided they are handled with intelligence and tact. There are very few farms in any section of the United States where a small band of sheep will not prove profitable. When it comes to raising them on a large scale, then the conditions must be exceedingly satisfactory for the most profit to be made. Considering the possibilities of returns from a well bred flock, in wool and mutton, it is hard to conceive conditions under which they will not return a profit.

To the industrious and persistent man who wishes to inform himself thoroughly on a line of industry which will guarantee him safe returns, sheep husbandry offers many advantages. It is hardly necessary to go over all of these because they have been so frequently discussed, it being only necessary to mention the fact that it is easy to make a start with them and if they do well it is equally easy to enlarge the extent of one's operations so as to make the most profit.

I consider the Southwest especially adapted for sheep husbandry, especially in the production of lambs, for the percentage of losses due to inclement weather during the winter or the absence of feed at that time is reduced to a minimum. I am intimately familiar with a shepherd in the southwest who has been able to secure an average of 80 per cent increase in lambs as a general run, and in one instance, I believe his increase was 90 per cent on 8,000 breeding ewes. Of course, the conditions are eminently satisfactory for this line of work and he is most painstaking and methodical in the management of his flock. I have been unable to find anyone sheep ranching, in any other part of the United States, who has been able to approach that percentage on that number of ewes. When you stop to consider the favorableness of the climate in the southwest, which not only reduces the risk of loss of lambs in early life, but also provides feed in abundance for sheep at all seasons of the year, it is easy to grasp the main advantage of the southwest for this industry. To the best of my knowledge, diseases are not any more prevalent in the territory mentioned than they are in other portions of our country. We have reached that point, however, in sheep husbandry where we can control the few serious diseases which proved the bane of sheep husbandry in the past. Scab, foot-rot and other like troubles are growing less frequent because of the state laws and the increased information along these lines which is possessed by our sheep breeders.

In making a start in sheep husbandry, unless one has had a past experience in the management of sheep, it would be best to begin with from fifty to one hundred head. If these cannot be made profitable, there is no hope of securing success with a larger number; once a man is able to handle that number intelligently and make money from them, it

is very easy for him to gradually increase his operations to full capacity. The most successful sheep rancher that I am acquainted with, made his start with 200 ewes for which he paid 75 cents a head. He made these profitable and by putting his profits back into the flock he now has 8,000 head which give him very satisfactory returns.

In securing the foundation ewes, I would not require very much in regard to their breeding except that they should be good sized ewes, well formed and thrifty. With the exception of swine, I believe that sheep may be more rapidly improved than any other class of farm live stock.

In choosing a ram to head this flock, I would be extra liberal in the matter of price so as to get the very best one possible for the purpose. In this way the improvement may be very, very rapid and very profitable. To my mind the most common neglect is the failure to select good rams. When it is recognized that a ram will transmit his good qualities and make a marked improvement on at least fifty or sixty lambs, it is easy to understand that in the years he may be used, it is possible for him to pay back many times the little extra money that has been put in his purchase price. I wish to impress this point most emphatically for I do not believe that it is recognized as generally as it should be in the breeding of our sheep. As one's experience grows in sheep farming, the possibilities of improvement due to the right selection of rams becomes the most astonishing feature of one's operations.

In the way of equipment, I would emphasize the necessity of having a good dip vat. When one considers the possibilities of loss in Scab and the damage that may result from ticks together with the possibility of improving the fleece through dipping, it is not putting it too strong to say the dipping vat is an absolute essential on a sheep farm. It is advisable to dip the ewes that the fleece may be made as cleanly as possible, and when the ewes are shorn it is generally advisable to dip the lambs for if there have been any lice or ticks on the ewes, these will go from them to the lambs and check the progress of the latter very quickly if they are not dipped. Then if lambs are bought and fed, there is more or less constant danger of bringing Scab or ticks into the flock unless these are dipped before being put into the feed lots. It will generally be found too, that when lambs are being fed in the feed lot that if they have not been dipped and Scab existed among them, it invariably breaks out so as to be very noticeable when the lambs are about two-thirds fat and they have to be hurried to market.

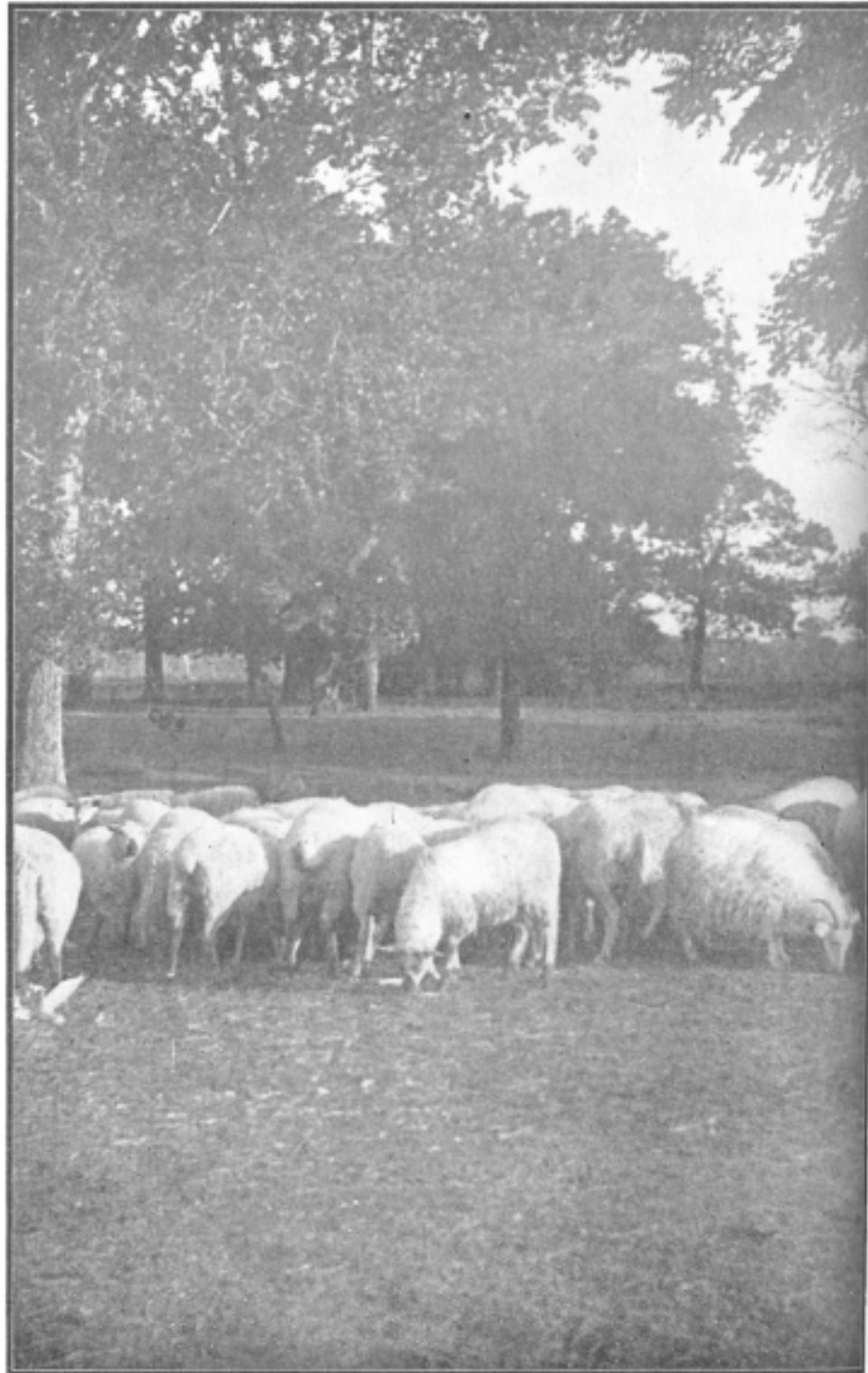
For the feeding of breeding sheep, there is nothing much better than the Mesquite, Gramma, Blue Grass and other Grasses which are common over the southwest. Then this section, too, has many localities where alfalfa does well and when properly cured there is no fodder which can surpass it for sheep feeding. Not only that, but such green fodders as rape do remarkably well if sown at the right time and sheep

are remarkably fond of this crop and lambs are greatly assisted in fattening by it. In the way of grain, there is nothing more fattening for sheep than corn and if with this, it is possible to feed a little oats, bran or peas, a ration may be made which cannot be surpassed for either lambs or older sheep.

In addition to the ordinary line of sheep farming, it seems to me that there are sections in the Southwest eminently adapted, because of their climatic condition, to the production of early lambs. That, however, is a highly specialized feature of sheep farming which may only be followed with success by one who has graduated and made a success of the lamb and wool growing, which is most general.

One who has qualities that enables him to handle any class of stock so that they grow thrifty may readily master the few details which are necessary to know to make sheep husbandry a success. Careful consideration of the wants of his charges and methodical attention with persistence along this line will enable anyone whose farm has satisfactory conditions for sheep to make a marked success of it. But there is no class of live stock, on the other hand, which will show in so many ways and to such a vast extent the results of neglect or abuse.

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INDICATIVE OF THE POSSIBILITIES OF THE SHEEP INDUSTRY IN OKLAHOMA.