

Preparing Wool for Market

THE preparation of wool for market is an important phase in sheep production that is often neglected by our sheep and wool growers. They may excel in all other phases of sheep production, but fail to package their wool clip in the proper manner.

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Breeding Program

Since a sheep cannot exceed its inherited ability to produce wool, producing wool for market begins with your breeding program. The type and quality of wool you produce depend on the selection and breeding within your flock.

Management

Feeding and management of your flock play a big part in the quantity and quality of your wool clip. Without adequate nutrition and good management you cannot achieve your maximum wool production.

When sheep are in winter quarters, hay comprises a large part of their diet, and the method of feeding hay can affect the income from the wool clip when marketed.

Feeding hay from high racks permits chaff, burs, and seeds to drop down on the backs of sheep. Nor should sheep be fed from racks where they have enough room to stick their entire heads into the hay. This results in fleeces matted with this material.

When bedding the pens or sheds with straw, and when placing loose hay in the feed racks, drive out the sheep to keep chaff and dust from settling into the fleeces.

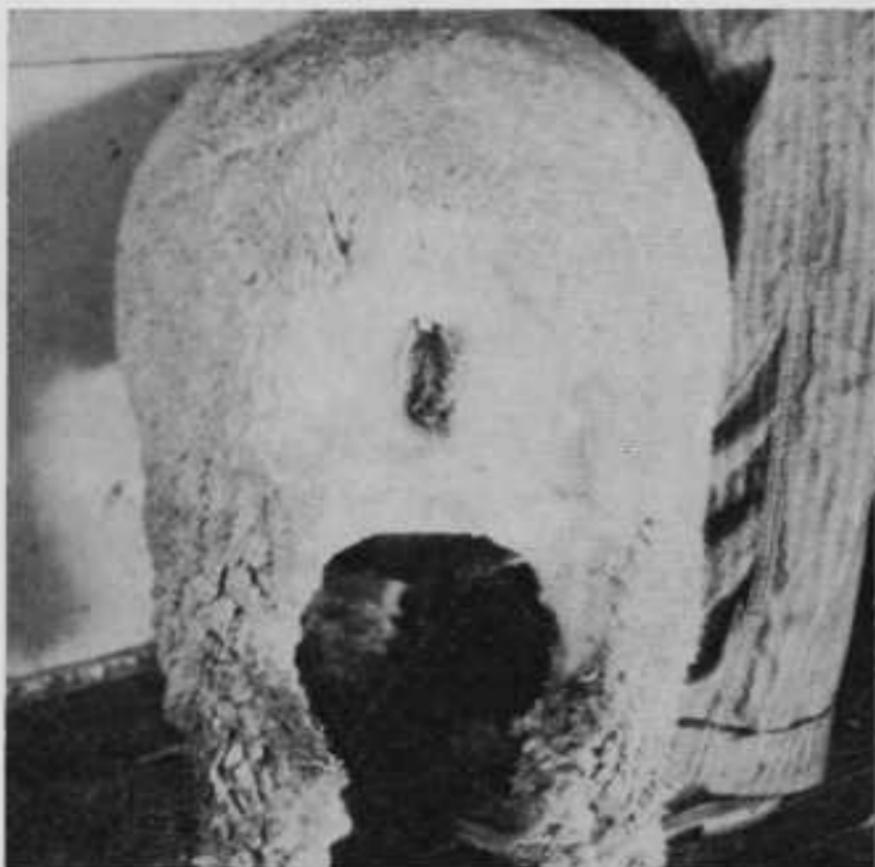
By observing these precautions, sheepmen will have fewer rejects when they market their wool clip.



Shearing heads in fall is excellent practice for preventing wool blindness. Midwinter view of sheep whose heads were shorn the previous fall.



Crutching-out ewe before lambing is a good management practice. Be careful when shearing around teats.



Rear view of crutched-out ewe. This practice, so desirable at lambing time, also will keep sheep clean and dry during summer—eliminating cause of much maggot infestation.



Shearing time is ideal time to trim feet.



**Weeds containing burs should be cut from pastures.
Burry, seedy, or chaffy wool sells at a discount.**



Remove all straw clinging to fleece before starting to shear.

Clean wool production requires year-round watchfulness. Weeds with burs and seeds must be removed from pastures if they are to be kept out of the wool.



Fragments of burs in wool carried over in cloth are removed by hand, causing additional expense and, therefore, a lower price to grower.

When to Shear

Early shearing of sheep and proper handling of wool will mean more profits to sheepmen.

Shear sheep early before the weather gets too hot. Early shorn ewes will graze on hot days and will produce more milk for their lambs. Early shearing also assures enough new wool growth to protect the sheep from many of the bothersome insects that arrive with hot weather.

It is a good practice to pen sheep and hold them off feed and water the night before shearing.

Shear sheep when fleeces are dry. Fleeces shorn damp will mold; wool packed damp will rot, and sell at a discount.

Preparing Sheep for Shearing

All sheep should be tagged before shearing. Clip off all dunglocks or wet tags before removing the fleeces. Dunglocks stain clean wool and give the fleece a heavy, soggy feeling.

Where to Shear

Shear on a clean floor, and keep a broom handy to sweep up dirt from time to time. With these precautions there will be fewer seedy and chaffy fleeces to be thrown into the reject pile when graded. It is good practice when shearing on a barn floor to use a clean tarpaulin.



Shear on clean, smooth-surfaced floor. Keep a broom handy so that floor can be cleaned from time to time.



Use Australian method of shearing so you can handle sheep with less effort. Take fleece off in one piece.

Avoid Second Cuts

Second cutting of the wool in shearing should be avoided. Shear close to the skin to avoid these second cuts. Try to remove fleece in one piece; it can be rolled and tied more easily.



Avoid second cuts when shearing. Keep points of shearing comb against skin throughout entire stroke. Short fibers resulting from second cuts reduce value of wool.

Tying the Fleece

The fleece should be tied with the clean side out. Roll in the sides of the fleece, two rolls on breech end, one roll on head end, then roll head end up over breech end and tie, using a 4-way tie. This makes an attractive package that will stay together and speeds up grading. Always use a good grade of paper twine; *never* use binder, sisal, or jute twine for tying wool.



Three fleeces as removed from bag at scouring plant. Weights are identical, but only middle one was tied properly. Fleece on left was tied too tight; one on right too loose. Use just enough paper twine so that fleece will arrive at your buyer's warehouse in good condition.



Black leg wool should not be tied in with fleece.



Place belly wool in middle of fleece.



Rolling side of fleece.



Both sides rolled in.



Ends rolled in to make a neat bundle.



Tie fleece with paper twine.

Storing the Shorn Wool

Store the shorn wool in a clean, dry place. Dry wool can be stored for a long period without reducing its value. Do not store in a damp barn or cellar.



The fleece weight of every sheep is recorded by many breeders to aid them in flock improvement program.



Properly tied fleeces are convenient for efficient work of wool sorter.

This circular was prepared by F. L. Kreuzberger, Instructor in Animal Husbandry, The Pennsylvania State University. It is reprinted by permission for distribution in Oregon.