

MONTANA Farmer-Stockman

It's Lamb Feeding Time

*Margins May Be Close
But Lambs Are Scarce
Demand Should Be Good*

By DAN THURBER

WHEN OCT. 1 COMES around and the frost is on the pumpkin, when the sugar beet leaves turn yellow and stubble fields are brown, it's fall and time to put into action all those plans you've made for feeding lambs this winter.

Fattening lambs for market is essentially a winter time enterprise adapted to irrigated farms in Montana. The project has many features which recommend it highly to any farmer on irrigated land who has surplus feed for sale and who wishes to maintain or increase the producing ability of his farm land by building a reserve of plant food.

Added to these factors must be the "liking" for sheep and some of the know-how of managing a feed lot. Expensive and elaborate equipment is not essential. Good corrals and pens well arranged to give ready access to both feed and water with a minimum of labor are advantageous, but such need not be costly.

Convert Surplus Feeds

Experience has proven that there is no better way to convert surplus feeds, those which cannot be sold on the open market, into a cash return than to feed them to lambs. Such feed as grain in stubble fields, tops from sugar beets, third cutting alfalfa hay and field growth which comes on after grain harvest has no cash market as is.

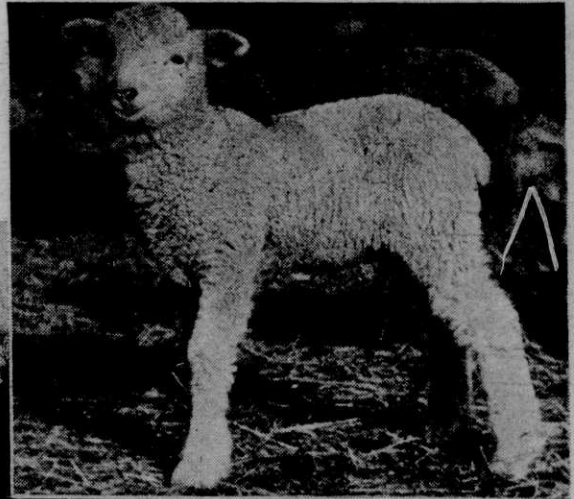
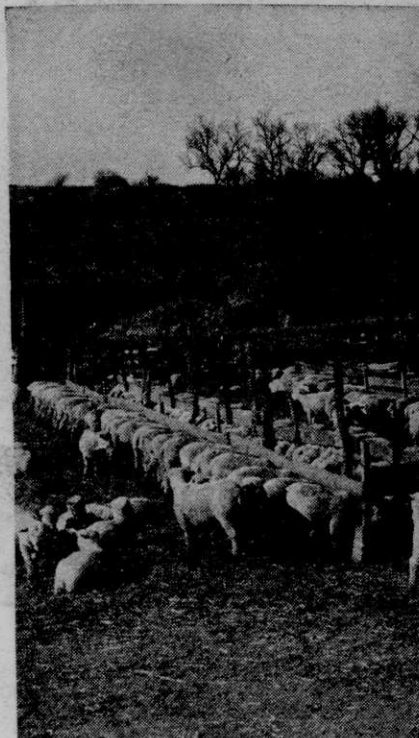
In order to get money from these feeds it is necessary to convert them into a finished product. Lamb chops constitute one finished product which can best be made from these feeds.

Good feeder lambs are scarce and high in price this year, costing 20 to 21 cents per pound. By this same token, 90 days from Oct. 1, when fat lambs are ready to sell, they should be few in numbers and relatively high in dollar value.

The United States lamb crop is 6 percent below 1948, which means there are 18,906,000 fewer lambs available than a year ago. Allowing for the heavy replacements which must be made from the ewe lambs, available feeders will be short much more than 6 percent. The shortage is general throughout the entire United States and can be attributed to an 8 percent reduction in ewes 1 year old and over on Jan. 1.

Smallest Lamb Crop

In the 13 western sheep producing states the crop is 5 percent smaller than last year. It is the smallest crop on record and 35 percent below the 10-year average.



Spring lambs such as the fellow pictured above were fewer in number this year than ever before. This was true for the nation as well as for Montana and Wyoming. With careful management the operator who has the surplus feed should find it profitable to convert it to lamb chops with a lamb feeding program this year.

Montana's lamb crop of 1,232,000 is the smallest of record, a reduction of 3 percent from 1948 and 1,463,000 less than the all-time high of 2,695,000 produced in 1944. That's only about half the lambs we had five years ago.

If scarcity makes a good market, and it nearly always does, farmers who have fat lambs for sale this year should be in the best position ever to realize a profit from their surplus labor and feed.

Feeding Score

A feeder starting out with a flock of 1,000 lambs weighing 70 pounds, may under ordinary conditions, expect results like this—

Oct. 1, lambs received on the farm and turned on beet tops and stubble fields.

For 60 days on good feed they will gain $\frac{1}{4}$ pound per day, putting on a total of 15 pounds in two months. By Dec. 1 the lambs will weigh 85 pounds and are ready for the dry lot.

Here they should be put on grain feed gradually and a good feeder will get them to eat 1.5 pounds of grain, $\frac{1}{4}$ pound oil meal and about 2 pounds of hay per day, or $3\frac{3}{4}$ pounds of feed per day.

On this ration they will gain 10 pounds per month and by Feb. 1 will weigh 105 pounds without shrink. Take off 5 pounds for shrink and you have a 100-pound fat lamb which is a very choice and very marketable product made largely from surplus feed and during a time when labor is also surplus.

Costs Score

The 20 cent lamb costs \$14. The field gains at 12 cents per pound (Milk River Valley price) and assuming a gain of 15 pounds, cost \$1.68. Feed lot gains cost 3 cents per day for 1.5 pounds of grain, and 3 cents for 2 pounds of \$30 hay plus 1 cent for $\frac{1}{4}$ pound oil meal at \$80 per ton. The total daily feed cost thus is 7 cents per head, and with a daily gain of .3 pounds makes a cost per pound of 21 cents. The 20 pounds gain in the feed (Please turn to page 4)

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