



Feed, shade, fresh water and salt are essential in making choice lambs on grass.



This pure-bred ram owned by a Giles County, Virginia, farmer, sired 90 per cent good to choice lambs.



Yearling Hampshire rams owned by R. S. Moss and Sons, Burkes Garden, Virginia.



Pictured here is the Moss flock of Hampshires as it grazes under ideal conditions.



Big, rugged ewes are found to be most profitable. Ninety-six per cent of the lambs from this flock graded good to choice.

## Virginia Lamb and Wool Improvement Program Shows Profitable Results

By Kenneth E. Litton

(Assistant Extension Animal Husbandman, Virginia Polytechnic Institute)

**S**HEEP producers in Virginia annually produce about 400,000 lambs for Eastern consumers and sell approximately 2,000,000 pounds of wool. Thirty-five counties in Southwest, Valley and Northern Virginia produce most of this volume. There are, however, several sheep owners in the tobacco section of the state that are doing well in producing market lambs. The most outstanding job in this section is the results accomplished by sheep growers in Halifax county, cooperating with their agricultural extension service leader, in following the prescribed program as to production and marketing. The Virginia lamb crop starts moving to market in May and runs through to December.

This lamb and wool project links up production and marketing. Their production program is based upon the requirements of the New York consumer and that means quality to the producer.

The lamb selling for the most money in New York is known as the "shop lamb," weighing from 32 to 42 pounds in the carcass. The lamb should weigh 80 pounds or above on the farm. Lambs will drift on the average of eight pounds to the head from farm to market, giving a 72-pound lamb in Jersey City if he weighed 80 pounds at home. This lamb should dress at least 50 pounds of meat per 100 pounds live weight, giving a 36-pound carcass.

### Certain Necessary Steps

Producers making high-quality lambs realize there are certain steps necessary in producing "tops." The first, is using good purebred mutton type rams that have the ability to stamp smoothness, early maturing tendencies, and high yielding qualities to a majority of their offspring. Good breeding eliminates much of the gamble. Regular treating for parasites is followed rigidly. No ewe can produce a top lamb when much of the feed she consumes goes to supporting parasites rather than to making milk and growing wool. Copper sulphate, a combination of copper sulphate and Blackleaf 40, and Nema capsules are commonly used treatments.

For winter feeding of the ewe flock, legume hay is the basis of the ration. We should plan now to have enough legume hay to give each ewe two pounds per head each day next Winter. Feeding for milk, a 16 per cent protein dairy ration is ideal. It pays to grain feed lambs if grass and milk are not good enough to make top lambs. Corn is a good lamb ration along with milk. To get them started, wheat bran mixed with cracked corn is excellent.

Dock and trim all market lambs. The killing interests make a cent per pound difference on buck and wether lambs and have not paid premiums on long tail lambs.

### Farm Grading Valuable

Farm grading before shipments are made is valuable to the producer, salesman and packer. The producer knows what he has before it leaves home; gets paid on the basis of quality and knows what to do in his production program to raise the quality average. The salesman handling lambs has a quality talking point and can sell to buyers interested

in those grades. The killer likes grading because he can fill his various orders, and will pay more readily for quality.

In 1935 ten per cent of the Virginia lamb crop was graded before shipping. Seventy-one per cent graded good to choice, weighing 74.9 pounds per head on the market, selling for \$7.23 each, for a value of \$211,058.16, the average selling price being \$9.65 per 100 pounds. Twenty-nine per cent were under grade lambs averaging 64½ pounds per head, selling for \$5.54 each for a total of \$65,499.42, the average selling price being \$8.58 per 100 pounds.

Choice (blue circle) lambs sold for 35 cents per 100 pounds premium. Good (red circle) lambs sold for 20 cents premium; medium (no mark), lambs were discounted 35 cents and common lambs for a \$2.50 discount. The load, sold on a graded basis, brought approximately 10 cents per 100 pounds above the quoted top, using the averages of the season. The average Virginia graded shipment contained blue circle 8.8 per cent, red circle 63.2, no mark 22.4 and common 5.6. Each double deck shipment averaged 240 lambs to the car.

### Community Organizations

Most leading Virginia lamb counties are organized on a community basis with a selling committee selected to work with their county agent and vocational teacher in keeping the producers informed as to shipping dates, meetings, ram sales and the like. In most instances, the same committee acts for both lambs and wool.

Lambs are weighed and graded at the scales nearest to them, then trucked to the loading point. Each producer is given a weight ticket showing the number, grade and weight of the lambs he has in the shipment. When the shipment is made, a duplicate weight ticket, entered on a manifest, is sent to the Eastern Livestock Cooperative Marketing Association office handling that consignment. Expenses are prorated by grades and the check sent direct to the producer, thus eliminating any chance of lost funds. A prorate sheet is sent to the person in charge of the shipment. Any producer can get any information he wants from it at any time.

### Set Up Own Agency

These producers, not satisfied with practices on the markets, set up a farmer owned and controlled selling agency on the Baltimore, Lancaster and Jersey City markets. This agency, operated by some 10,000 livestock farmers in the eastern states, is known as the Eastern Livestock Cooperative Marketing Association. During 1935 this agency handled 60,243 Virginia lambs, 7,986 cattle, 1,055 calves and 2,451 hogs and did two and one-half million dollars worth of business. They have set as their goal for 1936, 100,000 lambs and to double the cattle, calf and hog volume. The livestock producers of the East spend from \$600,000 to \$1,000,000 each year, in commissions alone.

Virginia sheep growers sold 832,082 pounds of wool cooperatively in 1935 for \$1,065,619.96. They made \$23,191.46 by cooperating. In addition, they set the prices for all the non-cooperators.