

an ocean voyage has given an added charm.

In selecting a ram, in addition to a general knowledge of what a good sheep is, the purchaser should have two things constantly in mind: the characteristics of the flock upon which the ram is to be used, and the standard to which it is desired to breed. A really admirable ram is not necessarily the best for all purposes. While good at all points, he should be especially strong in those which it is desired to develop in the future flock; of unquestioned lineage, so that his individual merits, as well as the general characteristics of his breed, may be depended upon to reappear in his offspring; of such size, vigor and carriage as to promise the largest amount of service in combination with satisfactory results. A really first-class ram is usually worth all his owner will ask for him, if he can be bought at all. The purchaser needs to be quite certain that he is getting just the ram suited to the improvement of his flock before he finds fault with the price demanded for such animal.

An important factor in estimating the value of a ram is the amount of service that may reasonably be expected from him. The only place where this can be accurately determined is in the breeding fold. Experiences of breeders, if called upon for facts, will disclose a range of service, in single seasons, of from thirty to five hundred ewes. While very few rams, even under the most favorable conditions, could perform the service indicated by the larger amount, to be a profitable investment one should be able largely to exceed the smaller number when circumstances required. When any beyond a limited number of ewes are desired to be served, the judgment of the shepherd should be brought into requisition for securing the maximum results with the least possible drain upon the physical and procreative energies of the ram. There are no mysteries connected with this duty. Common sense, careful supervision, liberal alimentation, about constitute the round of essentials. Given these, the limit of a ram's ability, which should always be kept with a wide margin this side the danger line, can best be estimated, and only accurately determined, while the service is being performed. When properly fed, and otherwise cared for, some Merino rams will serve five to eight ewes per day through the entire coupling season. This, of course, implies that the ewes are presented to him only when in condition to accept service, and that they are removed as soon as served. This course obviates the worry and unnecessary labor that prove so great a tax upon the energies of the ram when permitted to remain with or in sight of the ewe flock. From the heavier bodied breeds less service can be secured than is safely exacted from the Merino—though the limit is largely dependent upon such circumstances as those above enumerated, and is to be determined only in presence of those circumstances.

The desire the prudent breeder has in approximating the amount of service a ram is capable of performing, arises from a determination to avoid too near an approach to such limit rather than to have his animal

worked up to it. The one course insures greater certainty in conception and enhanced vigor in the offspring; the other tends to embarrass all calculations of future increase, and finds no sufficient excuse for its practice short of imperative necessity.

During the coupling season, and for some weeks in advance of it, the ram should have the advantage of such food and surroundings as will best fit him for the service to be exacted. With a liberal allowance of such food as will contribute to strength without too great tendency to fatten; with room for exercise where the presence of ewes will not excite him to restlessness; with shelter from storms, and the opportunity for shade when he prefers to enjoy it—under these conditions, and with the demands upon him so distributed through the day as to admit of time for rest and recuperation, a good ram will rarely disappoint the reasonable expectations of his owner, and often exceed them. Without such opportunities, much less may be expected, and these expectations must be moderate indeed to escape disappointment.

MANAGEMENT OF RAMS.

Circumstanced as the majority of sheep owners are, their main dependence for rapid improvement in the flock standard is on the stock rams. With this fact before him, the aspiring breeder stops at no effort, shrinks from no expense necessary to bring to his service really first-class males of the type towards which he is building. Not only is he interested in securing good rams, but he recognizes equally the importance in obtaining from them the best possible results.

The skill and enterprise of breeders have made it possible for flock managers to secure rams of high merit in all the types at prices that are reasonable when the amount and value of service they will perform is taken into the account. In the fine-wool varieties there is no country rivaling the United States. The American Merino stands at the head of all wool-producing sheep—yielding more pounds of cleansed wool in proportion to live weight, and returning a profit on the cost of its maintenance unexcelled by the best types of other countries. Though England, the home of the larger types of sheep, may still be drawn upon for rams to meet the demand of mutton-producing flocks, American skill is already contesting her claims to a monopoly of excellence in the long and middle-wool breeds. As good rams as they need can be had by American breeders near at hand, native bred, as well as those to which