

YARDING AND CATCHING SHEEP.

Where sheep are kept in numbers running into the hundreds, and treated as they must be to insure the most satisfactory results, the convenient arrangement of pens for catching and assorting will be found of more importance than the inexperienced man would imagine. Not many weeks are likely to elapse without bringing the necessity for a closer inspection than can be had in the pasture, while the stated periods for lambing, shearing, weaning, breeding, etc.—even where the absence of disease renders “doctoring” unnecessary—come too frequently to admit of the profitable employment of temporary arrangements for confining and dividing the flock. As the arrangement of pens must necessarily be contingent upon the number and location of the fields and pastures within ready reach, this feature must be determined largely by each owner for himself. There are, however, certain general rules that cannot be prudently overlooked, among them:

Location—This should be such as to require the least possible driving, and upon well drained ground, as the necessities of the occasion will often prevent “postponement on account of weather.”

Inclosure—Board fences, so high that the wildest sheep will not attempt to jump over them; openings so small that lambs will not get their heads through; posts strong enough to stand the pressure of any number of sheep that can be crowded against them. Over this should be a roof. This will not only protect shepherds and stock from the inclemencies of weather, but will serve a good purpose in quieting the flock, which is largely influenced by its surroundings—submitting the more readily as the possibilities for escape are diminished.

Gates—Should be so located as to escape the pressure of the flock while its members are being caught, with fastenings that cannot be forced by crowding, though easily handled when necessary. Sliding, rather than swinging, gates are preferable, as being not only safer, but more readily managed when pens are filled.

Size—At least one pen should be small enough to admit of the catching of a single sheep without hardship. In fact, several

pens of different sizes should be provided, so located with reference to each other as to allow stock to be conveniently passed from one to the other. Thus the animals in one larger pen may be separated into two or more divisions, each occupying an adjacent smaller pen.

The right manner of catching a sheep is something to be learned by practice rather than from written rules. All appearance of hurry and bustle are to be avoided, and no false motions are to be made. The sheep should be approached slowly, with the catcher's eye upon it, and when the situation warrants it he may stoop quickly, and, with his right hand, grasp the animal's hind leg above the hock, and, with a firm but gentle movement, draw it toward him; the left hand then thrown around the front of its neck, places the animal completely under control, and its struggling will cease. If guided by the left hand, and gently urged with the right by pressure on the rump, it can be moved in any direction with comparative ease. Catching or holding a sheep by the wool is to be avoided as both cruel and unnecessary. If for any reason it is found necessary to lift the sheep, the grasp on the hind leg is retained and the other arm passed under the brisket, back of the fore legs, when the animal's back will be brought against the breast of the catcher before there is found time for jumping and struggling.

The apparent ease with which an experienced man will separate, or lift, a pen of sheep, is something of a marvel to the beginner, who has depended upon “main strength and awkwardness” for accomplishing like results, and who now realizes that not alone the knowledge of *what to do*, but the skill of *how to do it*, must be acquired by sterner means than reading the rules laid down by some ready writer. The man who loses his temper while handling sheep but adds to the embarrassments of the situation, for in proportion to the abuses to which they are subjected, will be the difficulty in accomplishing what is desired.