

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF SHEEP-DRAFTING YARDS

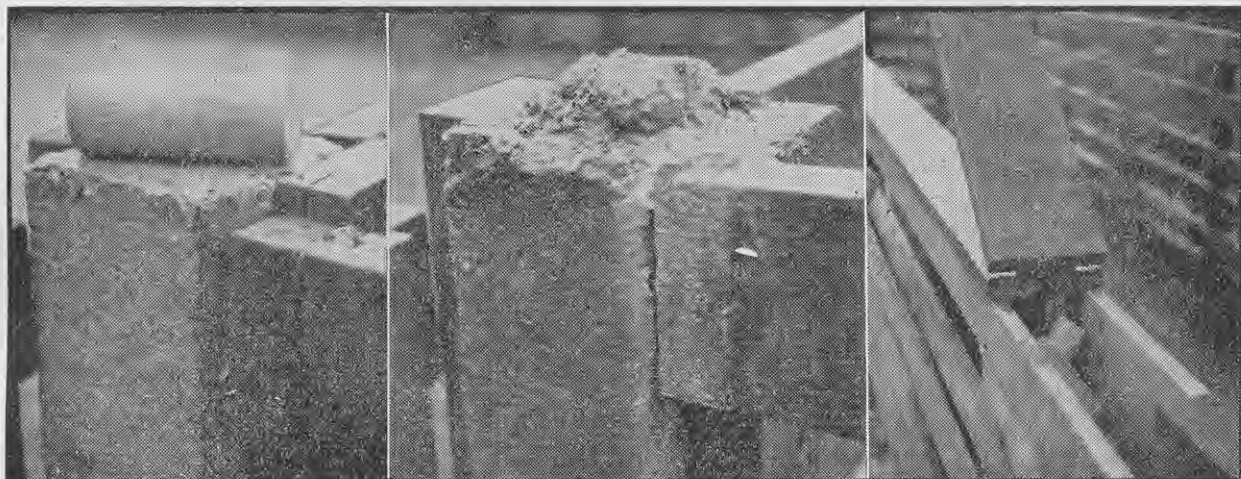


Fig. 14—Riddle exposed to the weather soon disintegrates. A simple remedy is to build a cupboard (right) into the double dividing fence of the crush pens.

It is desirable to have the floor of the race of something more durable than earth, as owing to the heavy traffic, earth very soon wears hollow. Concrete is excellent, but it must be left rough to give a good foothold. It is also a good plan to continue the concrete in a fan shape beyond the race at each end, because if it ends abruptly it leads to the earth wearing away and a sharp drop being formed. If timber is used, small hardwood cleats can be nailed across at intervals of a foot or so to prevent slipping. Cleats should not be more than $\frac{1}{2}$ in. high or they will do more harm than good by tripping the sheep. Whatever material is used for the floor it is a good plan to finish the boards of the race sides an inch or so above the floor, leaving a gap which lets the dirt out and helps to prevent it accumulating.

The above is a description of the race in its simplest form. The following are some modifications and refinements:—

Adjustable Races

In the case of the orthodox type of race the sides and the width between them are fixed at the time of building. The best width to use depends on the size of sheep which usually are put through the race; widths of 15 to 18 in. are usual. In any case it will be

somewhat of a compromise, since frequently sheep of all sizes from large rams and wethers down to lambs will be passing through it at different times and often in mixed mobs. Of course on a property running Merinos the race could be considerably narrower than where a large-framed line of Romneys were run.

The shortcomings of a race of the wrong width are obvious. If it is too narrow, the sheep will have difficulty in getting through at all, especially if carrying a heavy fleece, while if it is too wide, they will be able to turn round and there will be a strong tendency for them to try to get two abreast and so get jammed.

Worth Consideration

A race adjustable for width has, therefore, much to recommend it, provided of course that its efficiency is not sacrificed in any other way. Adjustable races have been used in Australia and Argentina and appear to have given satisfaction. Probably the reason that they have not been more widely used is that most farmers think the extra difficulty involved in construction outweighs the benefits to be derived from such a race. This is a matter for personal decision, but a few extra hours spent in building a first-class race will be repaid a hundredfold in time saved.

There are, broadly, two classes of adjustable races. The first type could be described as an elongated funnel, the neck or narrow part of which can be altered in width to suit different sizes of sheep. In other words one whole side of the race is hinged at one end and swings in or out at the other end in relation to the second fixed side of the race. This type is not particularly recommended, as there is a tendency for sheep to enter the wide end two abreast and to jam as they approach the narrow end. The second type also has one movable and one fixed side, but the movable side is hinged along the bottom, and at any given setting the sides are parallel.

The width on the floor of the race remains constant, which does not matter, since its width is ample for any sheep's feet; but higher up, opposite the spring of the animal's ribs, the width can be adjusted to suit any particular line of sheep being run through. Of course when a mixed line of sheep such as ewes and lambs is being drafted an adjustable race will not be very greatly superior to an ordinary one, but wherever large mobs of sheep have to be dealt with there will be sufficient "straight" lines of sheep to be drafted to make an adjustable race well worth while. The variation between the individual animals of any line will not be as

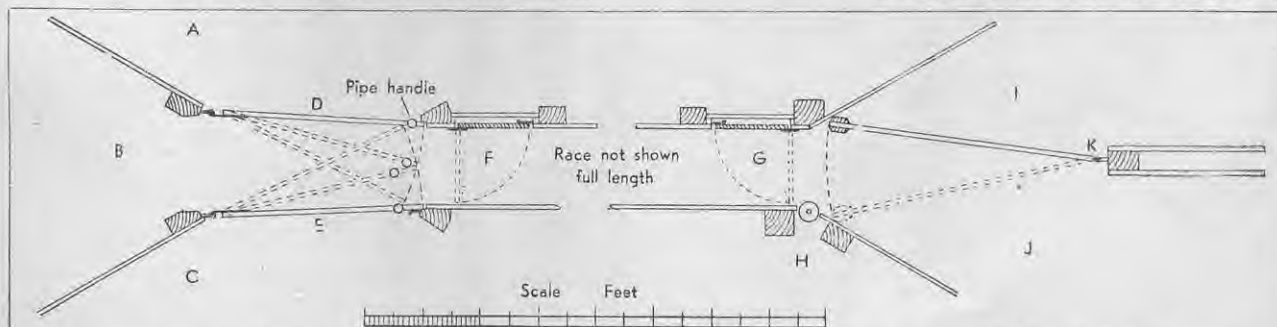


Fig. 15—3-way drafting race. A, B, C—Drafting pens. D, E—Drafting gates. F, G—Stop-gates. H—Roller. I, J—Crush pens. K—2-way gate feeding race.