



Fig. 22—Here 4 gates and 2 men working them allow 5-way drafting if necessary.

horizontally, as in plywood. This will give a light, strong, smooth gate, provided all nails are well hammered in and clinched over.

The gates D and E in Fig. 15 (page 135) should be provided with bolts or other fasteners by which they can be fixed back to the sides of the race, giving a straight run through. An additional stop-gate, fitting in flush with the boarding, can be provided at F to close off the drafting pen B, but it is not essential because when G is closed sheep in B cannot get out. Nevertheless such a gate is handy when a jam occurs and the drafter has to leave his position to rectify it. He can then close F to hold the sheep in the race until he gets back to his drafting gates,

4-, 5-, and 6-way Drafting

A number of the larger sheep stations in New Zealand are equipped with 4-way drafting races; that is, instead of the usual one or two drafting gates three are fitted, and this allows sheep to be drafted four ways. This arrangement works quite satisfactorily and at times when 4-way drafting is not required one or more of the gates may be fastened, leaving 2- or 3-way drafting with the other one or two gates in action. Attempts have been made at times to devise 5- or 6-way drafting systems, but these as a rule are not practical with only one man on the job. With a long race,

however, quite a good practice is to fit two additional drafting gates about half way along; then when an extra man is available and the necessity exists sheep can be drafted two extra ways as they pass along the race. These two extra gates can be used to supplement the normal drafting gate or gates and will thus allow drafting 4, 5, or 6 ways at a time. Their inclusion also makes the yards more versatile and is worth consideration when a large new set of yards is being built. Their use is illustrated in Fig. 22.

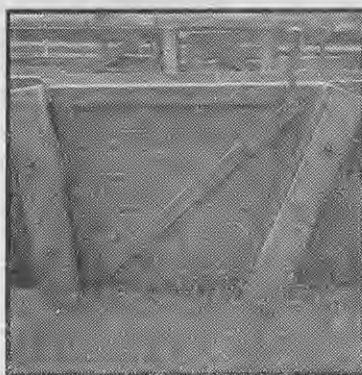


Fig. 23—When a tapered drafting race is used intermediate gates must be shaped and hung appropriately.

Drafting pens are sometimes omitted, or rather, where they open direct into the holding yards, they take on the functions and name of check pens. The number of drafting pens will vary according to how many ways drafting can be done. The reason for having both drafting pens and check pens is that while the sheep are issuing into the drafting pens another man can be at work on those in the check pens raddling, counting out, etc., without interference with fresh sheep continually coming in from the race. By the time he empties the check pen the drafting pen (which has the same capacity) will be full, and he lets these sheep through into the check pen, and so the process goes on.

CHECK PENS

Check pens are those into which the drafted sheep issue from the drafting pens in the case of a large yard, so their number will correspond with the number of drafting pens. Check pens may be of almost any shape, but they should not be too large or it will be much more difficult to pick out sheep which have accidentally got into the wrong pens. A capacity of about 100 sheep per pen is a good upper limit to their size to facilitate catching sheep and removing them. They may be smaller than this, but if they are made too small, any gain from easier catching of sheep will be nullified by more frequent filling and emptying and the time and labour involved.

BRANDING RACE

In New Zealand a branding race is not always included in a set of yards because the counting-out pens frequently open into a narrow alleyway which serves the purpose quite well. However, branding races are sometimes installed, usually on large properties, and in such cases take the form of a long narrow race holding a number of sheep in single file. One or both sides of this race are kept low to give easy access to sheep. They are, of course, filled from a crush pen, usually triangular, which communicates with all the counting-out pens. Such races enable branding to be done quickly and neatly, but it is doubtful whether they are worth the extra expense. A branding race might, however, serve a dual purpose and have a foot-rot trough installed in the bottom of it, in which case there would be more justification for its existence. Cases are also on record of such a trough, but deeper, being used for eradicating leg lice.

If a swing gate is placed at the end of the branding race, it will then act as a drafting race and will be found very useful as an adjunct to the normal drafting race.

This concludes the description of the drafting yards. It is beyond the scope of this article to go into yard work and the actual handling of the sheep. Such a description is hardly worth while, as the finer points which simplify this part of the work can be learnt only by practical experience.