

Type of Sheep

Although the production of wool is of paramount importance to the runholder, other factors have also to be taken into consideration when deciding upon the type of sheep from which it is intended to breed; it is sometimes necessary to make alterations in policy. The aim at Glenaray has been to breed a sheep that will suit the type of country, that will produce a fleece as fine as possible, and yet, having both these characteristics, will be attractive to the sheep farmer on the lower country who will eventually buy the cast ewes. To attain this almost dual type has not been by any means easy, particularly because sheep must be of sound constitution and be agile to make full use of the high country. The last feature is important, as the high country is available for only a limited part of the year and it is essential that the sheep turned out on it keep to the high country from choice, rather than having to be driven there continually. If, for example, the Romney influence becomes too dominant, the tendency is for the sheep to leave the high country in preference to the lower levels.

When the run was first acquired sheep were of a rather mixed breed and were found unsuitable for the proposed system of management. Immediate steps were taken therefore to effect an improvement. To standardise the type of sheep Mr. G. Pinckney introduced Merino rams, which were used until 1908, when Romneys were brought in and were used for 10 years. From 1918 to 1933 both Corriedales and Romneys were used, 60 Corriedale and 30 Romney rams being purchased each year during this period. From 1933 Romney rams only have been used. At present the Romney influence is strong, but the type of sheep being

bred is fulfilling the three qualifications mentioned previously: An active sheep, producing a fine but heavy fleece, and attractive to the sheep and dairy farmer as a cast ewe.

Rams

To maintain the carrying capacity of the run and the weight and quality of the wool 450 rams are necessary for the 13,500 ewes. Rams are purchased from local breeders, as no attempt has been made to breed rams at Glenaray because it has always been found much more satisfactory to buy in good flock rams of the desired type. Rams are usually disposed of after about 4 years' use, but this is not by any means a hard-and-fast rule, as age, type, and constitution are all taken into consideration. Every year rams are inspected before any new rams are purchased and any ram, irrespective of age, which is not considered desirable is discarded; all discarded rams are used for dog feed.

Type of Wool

The type of wool being produced on any sheep run is, of course, most important, as on it depends the return from the only major source of income. There is a wide choice from fine Merino down through the half-bred and Corriedale grades to crossbred, depending upon the type of country, climate, and management of a particular run.

At Glenaray the type of wool being produced has been influenced by the same factors as those mentioned previously as governing the type of sheep. As might be expected, the wool is a fairly fine crossbred, the counts of the fleece wools being about 46's to 48/50's. The fact that it is possible to provide supplementary winter feed has a considerable influence on the

... TYPE OF SHEEP AND WOOL

type of sheep, the quality of the wool, the number of sheep carried, and other phases of management of the run.

Shearing

Shearing usually begins about November 20 with the rams, which are followed by the paddock wethers, hoggets, and hill wethers, and finally the ewes. Once shearing starts there is no break except for wet weather and the Christmas holidays. Mustering of the various blocks is done in rotation and must be organised so that there is no confusion when bringing sheep to the shed or taking them away.

After the marking muster musters proceed to the high country and muster wethers while the shearing of the rams, paddock wethers, and hoggets is proceeding. While the hill wethers are being shorn the ewes and lambs are being mustered on the various blocks and are brought in. Lambs are drafted off, and while ewes are being shorn lambs are being wigged or eye clipped, two machines being kept busy in the yards on this work. Through eye clipping, wool blindness is avoided; a wool-blind sheep is seriously hampered on run country in its search for feed and consequently does not thrive.

The shearing shed at Glenaray has a holding capacity of about 2000 hoggets or 1700 adult sheep, and there is accommodation for 14 shearers on the board, although this number is not employed. The shed was built in the days of blade shearing; in fact part of it is the same building for which in 1874 John McKellar ordered the 45,000ft. of good "birch" (beech) timber from Wm. Boyer. Originally it had holding capacity for only 900 sheep, but it has been extended periodically.

Shearing usually begins about November 20; the illustration shows rams in the yards.

