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IMPROVE YOUR WOOLCLASSING AND YOU'LL IMPROVE YOUR RETURNS

By J. REILLY, Sheep and Wool Instructor

THERE is an old story, still going the rounds, about a farmer who pitchforked his wool straight into the press, and obtained the top price for the district. It might even be a true story, for most of us can remember the "good old days," when overwhelming demands prompted buyers to purchase almost any types of wool at no-limit prices.

Those days are gone however, and the woolgrower of today cannot hope to obtain the highest financial returns unless he is able and willing to prepare his clip with due regard to the buyer’s requirements.

During the recent boom years, there were times when some buyers did not discriminate greatly between good and mediocre classing. That is not the case today and during the current season’s sales we have often seen bales almost emptied on the show floor during a buyer’s rigorous inspection.

INSPECTION OF CLIPS ON SHOW FLOORS

Some woolgrowers are not aware that officers of the Sheep and Wool Section of the Department of Agriculture...
will, if requested, inspect clips on the show floor. They will advise growers on the degree of classing skill shown in the preparation of the clip and note faults in the wool that may call for stricter culling, better selection of rams, or factors such as copper deficiency which result in lack of crimp and general plain-ness of the wool.

All that is necessary to obtain this free service, is a request accompanied by the grower’s name and wool brand, the broker’s name and the sale date.

**IMPROVE YOUR CLASSING**

Woolgrowing and woolclassing have a natural affinity. To be able to handle and class wool is a MUST in growing good wool; for it is the basis of such wool improvement measures as culling and ram selection.

The more a grower learns about his wool through classing the better he equipped to apply such measures as may be necessary to improve his clip—and his financial returns.

To see his clip displayed when it is opened on the show floor prior to sale is an excellent opportunity for a grower to judge his handiwork. Not all growers can take advantage of this opportunity however and this is where the Sheep and Wool Section can assist him by offering expert advice.

**SOME COMMON FAULTS**

In recent years, officers of the Sheep and Wool Section have inspected many clips at the owners’ requests, and looking back over the reports on these inspections we find that most of the faults can be grouped into three main categories which—for want of better terms—we have called:—

1. Odd misfits.
2. General improvement needed.
3. Rough and careless work.
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Odd Misfits.

Under this heading are the clips of many growers who have been genuinely anxious to make a good job of their wool-classing but whose earnest desire to make as many bales as possible of their “top line” has led them to include occasional over-strong or heavy-conditioned fleeces.

While a big line is highly desirable from every point of view one must guard against including these “misfits.”

Repeatedly we have seen good Merino 60’s-64’s lines spoilt by the inclusion of 58’s or even lower counts.

To the discriminating buyer, these over-strong-for-the line fleeces create doubts. He wonders how many are scattered through that particular line and he could “play safe” by a lower valuation.

A similar position arises when greasy heavy-tipped fleeces occur in a fairly light-conditioned line. In this case, the buyer could “play safe” in his estimation of yield.

These “odd misfits” pull down the price of otherwise well-prepared clips—clips in which the growers have been careful to match for even length and good colour and have kept the line free from “doggy” fleeces. In general they have done a good job, but those odd good-style but over-strong fleeces have been allowed to go into the AAA instead of the BBB lines.

A report on his clip, pointing out this tendency will often prevent a grower from repeating his mistake in the following year.

General Improvement Needed.

In this category, we would include a number of growers who are not using a BBB line for their stronger wools and consequently their lines—although matched for length and colour—are very mixed in quality. We use the term “quality” in its wool-classing sense in referring to fibre diameter.
Fig. 4.—There is far too much good wool in this bale of locks.

Another common fault is the inclusion of tender fleeces in a generally sound line, usually through insufficient care in testing for soundness.

Then there is the grower who fails to employ a bulkclass line to the fullest advantage, with the result that some of his lines contain doggy and even matted fleeces. It is not hard to find bales containing a few cotts (matted wools) while actually the bulk of it is free, and the same applies with doggy fleeces.

Poor skirting of the fleeces is another deterrent to the buyer. Rough breech wools, oaty necks, burry flanks, etc., cause a number of buyers to think twice before valuing the lot. There are numerous points that, when attended to correctly, can bring about an improvement in the get-up of a clip and a higher cash return to the grower.

An inspection would reveal to what degree the basic principles of woolclassing have been observed and advice given enabling the classer to raise his standard. Eventually good work can be done, and with it comes the assurance that your clip will meet fully competitive buying and not from a section of the buying trade only.

A number of growers to whom woolclassing inspection reports have been forwarded have followed up this move by having their further endeavours checked. It is some satisfaction to know that a number of them are now turning out first rate jobs.

**Rough and Careless Work.**

In the previous categories we have included the growers who, while genuinely anxious to improve the get-up of their clips, do not have the experience and "know-how" to achieve good results.

Many of them are ready to accept constructive criticism, and their clips subsequently show a marked improvement in preparation which is reflected in higher financial returns.

There are still far too many growers whose clips are carelessly handled, being badly-matched and badly skirted.

Clips of this nature can always be sold. There are plenty of people anxious to buy them—at a price—so that they can re-handle them and make them acceptable to the trade—at a profit.

A little care in the original preparation of the clip would divert this extra profit to the grower's pocket.

Even in reasonably well-prepared clips, there are a number of bales which could often be handled more advantageously. We refer to the skirtings and oddments, particularly the pieces and locks.

Many lines of pieces contain short top-knots, stains, leg trimmings, etc., which lower the value of the line. These should be kept out of the piece lines.
Locks too, should not contain stains which should be baled or bagged separately, after drying, and sent for bulk classing.

Closer attention to the preparation of these lesser lines can be of considerable help in lifting the average price per pound of the total clip.

**RECORD CLOVER SEED HARVEST**

The present season’s production of certified subterranean clover seed has totalled 1,781 tons exceeding the previous record total of 1,616 tons harvested in 1954. This season’s record harvest consists of:

- Dwalganup .......... 1,336½ tons
- Mt. Barker .......... 150 tons
- Yarloop .......... 274 tons
- Bacchus Marsh .......... 15½ tons
- Tallarook .......... 5 tons

It is proposed also to clean and grade a further 130 tons of Dwalganup clover in the Narrogin district during the winter season.

Unfortunately owing to the large local harvest and heavy records in other States the prices for most lines are considerably lower than in previous seasons.

Although there is a demand for the Mt. Barker, Bacchus Marsh and Tallarook strains, Dwalganup, and to a lesser extent, Yarloop, have been produced in excess of immediate requirements.
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