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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Sheep flock, bees stock Wedge farm

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MOST PEOPLE know Summerside's Henry Wedge as provincial minister of welfare and labor and a successful pharmacist and businessman. But I talked with him this week about his sheep farming operation at Mt. Carmel.

Recalling that he has bred some championship winners at the Royal Winter Fair, Toronto – and that's the top achievement in agricultural Canada – I discussed sheep farming with him during a lull in this week's budget debate.

Last year a "Wedge" yearling ewe took the North Country Cheviot championship at Toronto for Allison Stewart, Marshfield. In 1959 a "Wedge" ram had taken the male championship for Mr. Stewart who has been a consistently successful exhibitor over the years.

I THOUGHT such success for the Wedge sheep – they carry the farm name "Wedge" and are easily identified – must have advertised the quality of Mr. Wedge's flocks. They have. I thought they would bring enquiries for purchases and I found that was right, too.

Enquiries have come from as far away as Vancouver and a Maine breeder is now trying to persuade Mr. Wedge to sell him 30 ewes. The Maine breeder tried for the same number last year and had to settle for two.

There's a terrific demand for the North Country stock in Maine where they cross well with the big breed they have there, the minister told me.

Goat Guards Sheep At Mt. Carmel

Mr. Wedge has 62 breeding animals and most of them are North Country Cheviots. He has a half dozen Suffolks. He likes to get his lambs early and already this year there are 26 of the frisky youngsters at his Mt. Carmel establishment.

The lambs are creep fed and brought along so that the disposable animals are sold early in September, when they catch the good price of that period.

I was interested in several of his methods. He keeps a goat in the flock and the self-appointed guardian challenges dogs, or any other menace that materializes. "The goat hasn't any better sense", he said with a smile. He also has a dog-proof corral to protect the lambs against night intruders when they are small. Dogs, a one-time major menace to sheep flocks here, bother him little now.

WEDGE PASTURES are seeded with a special mixture of sweet, tender grasses – there's no timothy – and the sheep are shifted every ten days on a rapid rotation scheme that keeps the pastures from being cropped bare. It also helps worm control, the owner believes.

The North Country stock was brought to this province something like fifteen years ago, by the federal and provincial departments of agriculture and the P.E.I. Sheep Breeders Association. They were liked for their vigor and growth, though I have found several good sheepmen who didn't like them.

But they're in keen demand. They easily topped the Royal's Sale of Stars last year. Wedge's champion brought \$270. And other Wedge-bred sheep brought \$240 and \$220.

I almost forgot it, but the minister is also an apiarist. His 75 colonies and more than three tons of honey in 1960 rank him as the province's second largest bee farmer.

Coming Events Have Farm Flavor

THERE'S A farm flavor to events coming up in the capitol next week. The Sheep breeders, the potato producers, the central farmers institute and the federation of agriculture share time in Tuesday's meetings at Birch Court. The dairymen take over at the YMCA Wednesday. The Easter beef show comes up on Thursday at the exhibition grounds and the sale of beef cattle is on Friday. Add the meeting of directors of the P.E.I. beef producers association on Thursday and the slate is filled.

The emphasis on beef cattle recalls the longtime controversy over the size of beef animals bred in this country. I'm thinking now particularly about the Shorthorns and the observations of W. A. (Bill) Sutherland, Massey-Ferguson farm manager at Milliken, Ontario when he was here earlier in the winter.

SUTHERLAND WENT to Alberta for a strain of bigger Shorthorns, bought an entire herd and is breeding and developing them at the company's Ontario farm. He said his females were several hundred pounds bigger. He had bigger frames to build beef carcasses on, and he was happy.

He also reported that his cattle have been penalized in Ontario show rings because they "are too big" and he questions the sense of such a decision. It does seem silly to penalize a beef animal for size, if it has the conformation and type desired for the meat producing industry. But as long as the bigger scale animals are vastly in the minority, I imagine they'll be placed at the bottom or near there. The first judge that does otherwise will be breaking a trend that has been developing for almost twenty years..

I must add that most Shorthorn men I've talked to are happy with the present type, though there are exceptions in this province as well as elsewhere.

Almanacs Recalled As Time Tellers

GEORGE SAVILLE, MLA dropped in this week to complain about modern almanacs. "I bought one for \$2.50 and it hasn't even got the signs of the zodiac in it", he criticized. He contrasted the present lack of good almanacs with "the time when store counters were full of them".

What I found interesting was his recollections that his father used an almanac to tell the time. The time of sunset was recorded in the almanac, the sun's setting was carefully observed, and the family clock was corrected.

WHEN I remarked that sun dials have all but disappeared, he retorted “there’s one on a Flockton tombstone at Fortune”. Only one I recall seeing is at Col. E .W. Johnstone’s attractive property at Burlington.

What I’ve always wondered is how they told the time when the sun wasn’t shining. Or did they always have a clock in the house too? Perhaps someone can enlighten me.