

THE STRANGE VISITOR

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"THE FARMER IS OF MORE CONSEQUENCE THAN THE FARM, AND SHOULD BE FIRST IMPROVED."

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WHOLE NO. 398.

Wool.

HOW SHALL IT BE PUT UP AND SOLD?

Letters From Leading Wholesale Houses, Wool Growers, And Local Buyers.

(Continued from last issue.)

We have no more letters from commission houses but present some from growers and buyers. The following are from the

Growers.

These are the questions asked:

1. What is your customary method of putting up wool? Do you grade in any sense of the word?
2. Have you sold to local buyers or do you ship to wholesale houses? Why do you prefer your method of sale?
3. Do you think that farmers as a rule put up their wool in the best manner? Would it pay them to do it better?
4. Would it be practicable for growers to skirt their wool, separating tags and etc, and to sell in two or three grades?
5. Do local buyers generally buy wool on its merits?
6. What is the cause of the antagonism between the growers and the buyers?
7. What remedy would you suggest for the difficulty?

GEO. W. STUART.

1. Our customary method of putting up wool is to put into the fleece all except heavy tag locks, not grading it in any sense.
2. Have sold both to local buyers and wholesale houses; three years at Wm. Peter's factory, Columbiaville.
3. I do not think as a rule farmers put their wool up in the best manner and think it would pay them to do it better.
4. We have tried the skirting plan this year. Shipped to Philadelphia, have not got returns yet. We made three grades: "fleece," "frips" and "skirtings," and "heavy tags."
5. Very few local buyers buy on its merits.
6. The antagonism between growers and buyers is a lack of knowledge on the part of both of the value of wools, "condition" and "quality" as well as the uses made of the different grades by manufacturers. There is no doubt but that some, and a good many, wool growers practice fraudulent methods in putting up their wool for market, and as in all other business matters seriously cripple that confidence which ought to exist in all business relations. In fact I believe the antagonism existing is more chargeable to the wool grower than to the buyers, not so much from a lack of honesty as through ignorance of that higher plane of business methods, and real value of their product. Good goods will find a ready market, and command good prices, while poor find a begging market.
7. My remedy is:
 - a. To stop washing, when the question of washed or unwashed fleece is done away with.
 - b. Better methods of putting up either by skirting or grading, but above all have the fleece as represented. I believe the local markets the most satisfactory when confidence can be fully established, and hope to see the time when this will be the case. I believe in the middle man and think better satisfaction will be found, both by the grower and manufacturer, when intelligent local dealers are able to handle the wool, paying for it at time of delivery, and agreement made either at the barn or wagon. There are risks attending the shipping of wool to commission houses, and I doubt if the plan will

be found satisfactory to the average wool grower, but until some improvement is made upon present methods more or less wool will be shipped to wholesale houses. This may be profitable with large ranchmen but is not at least satisfactory with small flock masters.

Grand Blanc.

RICHARD DOUGHERTY.

1. I keep my sheep dry through winter and tag the wool early; put it up with a box, with six strings of common wool twine, taking sweat balls and refuse and put them with tags and sell without any other grading.
2. I generally sell to local buyers, because I know just what I am doing and my money all comes at once, which is not generally the case when sold on commission.
3. No; and it would pay I think to do it better, certainly if all would do so.
4. No; always separate tags; no other grading unless perhaps when sheep are kept in large flocks.
5. They pretend to do so but generally get very desirable clips below their real value as compared with less desirable wools and thus many times discourage the careful farmer.
6. The cupidity and selfishness of man, his lack in judgment and proper discrimination and sometimes his dishonesty and a willingness to overreach his fellows.
7. This is most difficult to answer satisfactorily but I would suggest that farmers be instructed through the VISITOR, the Michigan Farmer, and by the local buyers, how to care for their sheep, how to shear and tie up their wool, and then let the latter give credit to those who do it well by paying them liberally and by making those who do otherwise feel it by obliging them to take a lower price or sell elsewhere and tell the reason of such discrimination.

Three Rivers.

L. D. WATKINS.

1. It is my custom to put up the entire fleece, less sweepings and tags.
2. Some times ship, usually sell at home. This year to Clinton woolen mill company, 10,609 pounds fleece at 20 cents, no discounts, and 649 pounds tags at 9 cents. Two clips.
3. I believe as a buyer and grower that our farmers as a whole put up their wool at least as well as they do in Ohio, or any other state.
4. Skirt? No. Tags? Yes.
5. No.
6. The cause is not dishonesty or intent to deceive the buyer, and I indignantly repel any such statement or innuendoes. There is nowhere a more honest, intelligent clean-cut class of men, engaged in any industry or profession, than the farmers of Michigan.
7. I believe that all this uproar about condition of our wool, is to get this year's clip at less than its value.

The whole matter stands thus: Ohio wool averages about four pounds less per fleece than ours, on account of less oil and less density of fleece. Still ours bring the grower more than twenty-five per cent more than Ohio fleeces each. I will admit that there is a class of wool that was found all over Michigan that has undoubtedly lowered the standard of our wools. I refer to the wrinkly short woolled Merino that was in fashion some years ago. The entire fleece was in no way more valuable, or would net more scoured wool than tags.

Finally, don't consign your wool to any man or firm or commission to sell for you. If you do so as

a rule, you are lost. The moment your wool leaves your hands you can never know what becomes of it, or what it sells for, or how it is graded (thrown). You may depend on one fact: the writer has had experience on this line.

Manchester.

W. J. GARLOCK.

1. I shear all the wool from the sheep before they go out to grass, putting each entire fleece, tags and all, in a package by itself, rolling the inside of the fleece out and winding enough twine around to hold it in place. Do no grading.
2. For 10 or 12 years have invariably shipped to wholesale dealers, they furnishing sacks, and advancing two-thirds to three-fourths the clip value on receipt of bill of lading, balance at sale. Think I always get as much and sometimes more than local buyers prices.
3. As a rule I think the farmers put up the wool in very fair condition and doubt if much more could be realized with more care. Think more is lost from raising short, gummy staple than from poor conditioning.
4. No, not by any means. Farmers are not wool sorters, and only a part of the dealers are.
5. A few do and a good many do not.
6. There are many causes, chief among them is low wool values the world over. When wool brought \$1.00 it could be bought and sold with the eyes shut; now it is finer work to handle the clip and realize a margin.
7. That is a hard question. Candidly, I think wool growing in Michigan has passed its hey-day of prosperity.

Howell.

GEORGE E. BRECK.

1. My sheep are always kept free of dirty tag locks, and sweat locks are put into each fleece without grading. I use a small linen wool twine, taking pains to make the fleeces look as neat and compact as possible.
2. For two previous years I have shipped to commission houses in Boston. This year I sold to a buyer from a distant town who claimed to have a contract for my particular grade of wool and he offered me the same price I had received net by shipping for the two years last past.

After it was announced that I had sold to a buyer from another town, our local buyers were very anxious to buy and claimed they would give as much or more than he had paid for mine.

In many respects it is more satisfactory to ship. It is no more trouble, as the wool is more easy to handle when sacked, and you feel you get all your wool is worth if you have confidence in the commission house.
3. With a few exceptions, I believe the farmers of this community have put up their wool as well as could be reasonably expected.

An examination of a large number of clips leads me to believe that it is skillfully and nicely done.

I do not believe it would pay them to do it better. Of course in this conclusion I exclude all men who are naturally dishonest and seek by various schemes to cheat the buyer.
4. I do not believe that at the present time it is practicable for growers to skirt their fleeces or to undertake to grade.

The great wool markets of our country are close at hand, comparatively, and the grades in each fleece are so averaged in estimating the value of each fleece that practical results are the same in our

present system as would be obtained should each grower try to grade his own.

There is no absolute standard for grading, and when each grower has done his grading to the best of his judgment, the buyer who is always ready with excuses would find some reason for not being satisfied.

5. Local buyers do not buy wool on its merits. This is illustrated time and again. The fact is that a small per cent of the wool growers know the difference in quality and grade of wool. A pound of wool is a pound of wool, and a fleece is a fleece with too many.

6. Antagonism between buyers and growers arises from two sources, one of which is indicated in my answer to question No. 5. First, growers are not close judges of the quality of wool and from their limited experience can not be; and second, buyers take advantage of this and use their art to make the grower believe that his wool is not as good as his neighbor's for which he has paid more; the buyers thus taking advantage of the better information which they have both as to what the price ought to be and the quality of the particular lot of wool, and thus the grower becomes suspicious of them as a class. Overreaching on the buyer's part and suspicion on the part of the seller have caused the open breach.

7. In my opinion wool growers will do well to keep their wool free from chaff and hayseed and burs; in fact, keep the sheep as clean as possible. Shear early, without washing, and ship to a reliable wool commission house in Boston or Philadelphia.

I have for some time been dreaming over a plan in which large quantities of wool could be stored in some central shipping point and then thoroughly advertised among the manufacturers and wholesale dealers, that it be graded by an expert hired in common, and sold at auction to the highest bidder; and think it could be made practicable.

Paw Paw.

H. C. MOORE.

1. I do not grade it. I shear my sheep in April, before turned out to grass, so they do not get dirty. I tag my ewes in March and when I shear my sheep put the tags in the fleeces, as they are just as clean as the wool on the inside of the legs of those I shear.
2. I have always sold to local buyers, have not sold it this year, will ship it myself next week to a commission merchant. I do it to save the money the local buyer would make on it, and I have learned that it does not pay to let some one else do my own business for me and get big pay for doing it.
3. I think as a rule the farmers intend to put up their wool in a proper manner. Of course there are some that do not. It is generally done up after several shearers in a rapid manner, and perhaps there is some wool goes in that would not if they had more time to look it over.
4. I have heard men say who have skirted their wool and sold it in two or three different grades, that it did not pay, as they did not get as much for their clip as when they put everything together. When wool is bought as it ought to be perhaps it would pay to separate it into different grades.
5. I know the local buyers do not buy wool on its merits. Perhaps some do but they are mighty scarce. As a rule it makes no difference how much delaine a man has in his clip, it is bought at X prices so that he would make a profit on it if it was all X wool.

I have seen buyers get on a load

of wool and ask if it was washed. They could not tell the difference between washed and unwashed wool. And I have seen them throw out (and discount one-third), some of the choicest fleeces in a load, because it was yellow, as they said, when the fact of the matter was it had a buff oil and no more of it and no heavier, but a great deal better wool than lots of the fleeces that had a white oil. And the man that owns the wool, nine times out of ten won't say a word, and will let the buyer gull him. Why? because he has got to sell it and he might as well let this buyer fleece him as some other, as this discounting is a custom they have adopted, and he knows it.

6. I think the cause of the antagonism between the growers and the local buyers is answered in the above.

Between the grower and the commission merchant, if he sells his wool or consigns it to him, is this, he never knows what his wool is sold for and never will. He is completely at the commission merchant's mercy. His wool may grade a large per cent of delaine one year and the next year have scarcely any from the same sheep. But I believe this method of selling wool is far preferable to selling to the local buyer.

7. I believe there is a remedy for all these difficulties. I hardly know how but something like the following:

There could be warehouses or suitable buildings rented by the farmers at different points in the wool growing districts and an experienced man hired, or paid by a commission to weigh in their wool and grade it and give them credit for the number of pounds of each grade and do all the business necessary to be done in such a place. After a certain number of pounds had been taken in notice could be given to different factories that they had so many thousand pounds of the different grades for sale. When the sales were made checks or drafts could be given (in the names of those who had weighed in their wool) by the purchaser. I have given one thought in regard to a remedy and believe that some such a method must be soon adopted. It would do away with the middle men who are bloodsuckers to the farmers' and save them thousands of dollars. They do not sell their wool on its merits or get what it is worth and never will until some such method is adopted.

North Farmington.

H. H. HINDS.

1. No Michigan growers grade their wools.
2. Have always shipped my wool to eastern markets, with two exceptions, and then I put a satisfactory price on it at my barn and it brought the price I asked. Prefer that method for it is then graded and sold on its merits.
3. No. It most certainly would if they were selling to a judge of wool.
4. The tags and unmerchantable wool should go to market by itself and not pollute the merchantable and high priced stock.
5. No. A large per cent of the local buyers are not judges of wool and, besides, they usually buy for a certain rate per pound and any heavy undesirable wool that would not absolutely be rejected by the parties for whom they buy, is the most desirable for them to handle, as it weighs more and brings a larger commission.
6. I do not know as there is any antagonism between growers and local buyers. This is a free country

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