tiple iron holder was used, application time was reduced to 40 seconds/animal because all irons could be fitted into the holder while the animal was being prepared for branding. Since branding usually done in conjunction with vaccinating and dehorning, the time saved on numbering 300 steers with the multiple iron holder as opposed to individual numeral placement was approximately seven hours for a crew of five men. Two hundred thirty-one of the 900 brands (27%) were still clearly legible eight months after application.

Sheep Ranching in South Dakota

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Rancher, Rapid City, South Dakota.

Fig. 1. Wintering sheep on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota.

The Cover Photo on this issue of the Journal shows one band of 1,200 sheep wintering on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation southeast of Rapid City, S.D.

Returning from World War I service in France in 1919, I started with a small flock of sheep on a ranch north of Rapid City. By 1928 we built the flock up to 1,400 head and applied for a permit to graze on the Black Hills National Forest. We ran two bands in 1927—the National Forest range has carried two bands for 42 years and shows marked improvement and greater carrying capacity. There are more than 50 dams with ponds fed by springs, runoffs, and numerous roads. In recent years, we consolidated the two bands in partnership with my son, Philip. By 1940, herdsmen were hard to get so we fenced the Forest ranges with the encouragement of W. R. Chapline and E. D. Sandvig. The home ranches also are fenced and crossfenced and altogether we keep up 140 miles of fence. Ewe lambs, buck lambs, and herd bucks are run on the home ranches. We also run a small herd of purebred Highland cattle to utilize the lower-quality range and hay that the sheep refuse. In 1931 we began wintering our sheep on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and we still winter there. Supplemental feed is produced mostly on our ranches north of Rapid City, where we have 1,000 acres of alfalfa and 500 acres in cultivation. Alfalfa mixtures are grazed during the spring. Bromegrass, intermediate wheatgrass, and harvested wheat in an alfalfa—wheat mix are cut for use as winter feed. A thorough job of spraying cockburns is done to reduce damage to the wool clip. Dipping vats are located in each of the three areas of operation. A coyote repellant is used for dipping to try to hold down predator losses. This is still in the experimental stage.

Our sheep have been linebred for more than 30 years and produce one of the highest priced wool clips in the country. Our original cross was Romney-Rambouillet with a half blood long staple. We shear in March and lamb in April. Our wool is sold by core test and grades mostly half blood. We hold 1,200 ewe lambs for replacement each year and all ewes are sold at 5 years of age. Sheep are face fire-branded with the registered brand. In 1968, we marketed our lambs as usual digit and thereby minimize the surface area requirements for placement of three irons simultaneously.

LITERATURE CITED

on Sept. 5 at an average weight of 87 lb. We sell several hundred linebred bucks each fall. The yearling ewes are car-tagged with a different color tag each year. Loading chutes are available on all ranches. Large movements of sheep are done by regular truckers. Snowmobiles are used on the winter range and motorcycles are used more often than horses.

Our greatest problem is coyotes and bobcats, predators that have consistently robbed us of much of our net profits which lately have been rather limited in the sheep business. Poisonous weeds are rare under our type of management. Parasites are no problem where we have a rather extensive method of rotation. Summer range and Indian Reservation range are 150 miles apart. A thorough job of spraying cockburns is done to reduce damage to the wool clip. Dipping vats are located in each of the three areas of operation. A coyote repellent is used for dipping to try to hold down predator losses. This is still in the experimental stage. It seems that the utilization of considerable range land would best be served by a sheep ranch—farm combination, since sheep and wool represent about 70% of only agricultural industry not in excess supply at present. Finally, management of open range in sheep production is just as important as weight per fleece and weight per lamb.

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