

MARKETING OF ARIZONA'S CATTLE AND SHEEP

By IRWIN INGRAM, '26

1,000,000 Head of Cattle and 1,155,000 Sheep Now on Arizona Ranges— Northern Counties Lead in Grazing Industry—Southern Arizona Furnishes Winter Range for Sheep

THE marketing of Arizona's cattle and sheep to bring the largest returns to the producer has become quite a problem. The producer not only has to combat the fluctuation of prices but the elements of nature, such as climatic conditions and water and forage supply.

The last few years, due to the drought in this section of the range country, the climatic conditions have to a large extent determined the time of shipping. Also, a lack of forage has decreased the size of herds and flocks over the entire State. The breeding herds have been materially cut down during the past three years due to the drought that has prevailed over the ranges, and, as a result of their lack of forage and water, many of the ranchers have marketed their calves at an early age.

Beef Cattle

The majority of Arizona beef cattle are produced in the northern and central parts of the State, and only a few in the southern part. The counties in which are found the largest number of cattle are, in order: Yavapai, Coconino, Maricopa, Gila and Graham. The means of transportation to market are the Santa Fe and Southern Pacific railways. The former has its main line and branches across the northern part of the State, and the latter across the southern part. This makes shipping facilities available with very little driving to the shipping point. The Santa Fe has as points of destinations Los Angeles, Denver and Kansas City, while the Southern Pacific has Los Angeles and El Paso.

Approximately seventy-one per cent of Arizona cattle go to Los Angeles, where they are sold as feeders or stockers, or are purchased for slaughter by the independent packing companies.

The yearling steer is the principal cattle product marketed from Arizona. Calves are next in importance, followed by old cows and mature steers. Old cows are usually culled from the breeding herds and the mature steers are from the higher ranges and are usually marketed in good condition.

According to C. V. Whalin, U. S. D. A. agricultural economist, there are two marketing periods for Arizona cattle. During May and June 30 per cent are sent out of the State following the Spring round-ups, and from October to December, inclusive, 30 per cent are marketed following the fall round-ups. A few cattle are finished annually on silage and cottonseed products in the Salt River Valley. This fat stock is marketed during the months from January to April, inclusive.

In order to avoid this periodic marketing of livestock from the territory which supplies the California markets, an association known as the California Marketing Association, was formed in California. The principles of this organization are to have more orderly marketing of cattle, to insure a steady movement which would prevent overloading of the market, and to secure a better and more uniform price throughout the year. The Association is trying to stabilize marketing for the rancher. Through its representatives, who are known as fieldmen, a carload or trainload of cattle may be ordered and delivered in 48 hours. The ranchers belonging to this organization must sign a contract or agreement with the Marketing Association.

In the past, Arizona cattle have not commanded as high a price as other western cattle of a similar grade. This discrimination was in part due to inferior breeding, but by the introduction of purebred bulls the standards of production have been raised until at present Arizona cattle compare favorably with competing stock. The use of purebred bulls has increased until at the present time there are approximately 124 head of cows to one purebred bull in the State.

Climatic conditions are to a large extent the governing factor in the time of marketing Arizona cattle. The rainy seasons occur in the summer and winter, and if a drought period is incurred at either of these times it naturally causes a shortage of forage and the stockmen are forced to sell part of their herds in order to

have forage for the breeding stock. The drought prevailing throughout the Southwest the last few years has decreased the size of herds over the entire State. The U. S. D. A. Yearbook gives the number of beef cattle for Arizona as follows: 1921, 1,100,000; 1923, 1,092,000; 1925, 1,027,000; and an estimate made by the Animal Husbandry Department of the University of Arizona places the January 1, 1926, number at less than 1,000,000 head.

Approximately 200,000 head of cattle are shipped out of Arizona annually, and about 90,000 head are slaughtered locally. Only around 40,000 are finished in Arizona feed lots. Thus, only a small portion of the market cattle are purchased by local packing plants. Most of the cattle are disposed of to local representatives of marketing agencies or are consigned to commission firms. The marketing association is beginning to be an influential factor in determining the manner in which Arizona cattle are disposed of.

Sheep

The majority of Arizona sheep are produced in the northern and central parts of the State, only one county in the southern part producing any large number. The ranking of the counties according to the number of sheep produced is as follows: Coconino, Apache, Yavapai, Navajo, Mohave, Maricopa and Cochise. Ninety-five per cent of the sheep are produced in the first five counties, according to C. V. Whalin, U. S. D. A. agricultural economist.

There are two distinct periods of heavy movement of Arizona sheep, approximately 31 per cent of the year's total being shipped during April and May and 23 per cent during September and October. The 1924 U. S. D. A. Yearbook gives the total number of sheep in Arizona as 1,155,000 head. Of these approximately 210,000 head are marketed annually, 60,000 in the spring and 150,000 in the fall. Most of the sheep marketed in the spring go direct to slaughter, whereas many of those marketed in the fall are

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bought for stocker and feeder purposes.

The market movement of both sheep and lambs is largely determined by the conditions under which they are produced. Of these conditions the

lambing time is considered the most important. As a rule both sheep and lambs are shipped at the same time, although frequently the ewes are held back for further grazing after the lambs have been weaned and shipped. Range conditions also serve to quicken or retard the movement of grass stock.

Over a half million sheep graze on

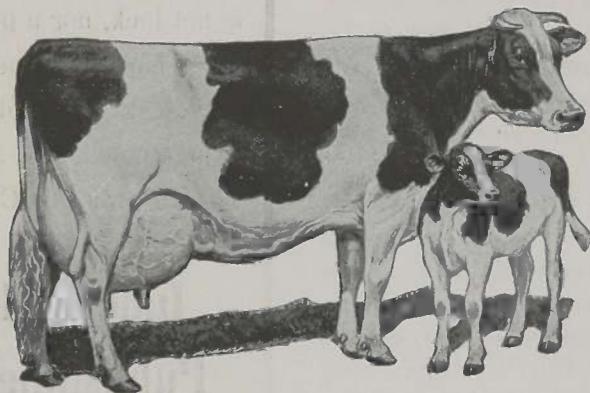
the higher ranges in the northern part of the State during the summer months. At the end of the summer grazing period they are moved to the shipping points, where the old ewes and marketable lambs are sorted out. Part of the culls go to the Salt River Valley to be fed out; many of the lambs go to the west coast or to Kansas City as fat lambs, while others go to Colorado or to the corn belt as feeders.

Some ewes are moved southward to the warm valleys, where their lambs are dropped in the late winter or early spring. The ewes and lambs are grazed northward as soon as feed is available, and by the time they reach the northern shipping points the lambs are in condition to market.

A considerable portion of the spring lamb crop is usually raised from older ewes. The old ewes are bucked early for November or December lambing. Early in the fall the ewes are moved to the warm valleys of southern Arizona, where green winter forage, supplemented whenever necessary with valley-grown feeds, makes it possible for the young lambs to reach the 60-pound mark by Easter time. These "hot-house lambs," as the Easter lambs are called, are shipped to Los Angeles, Kansas City, and sometimes to Chicago, depending on the price and demand.

The destination of Arizona sheep has changed little during the past five years, except that there is an increasing number shipped to Los Angeles and a corresponding decrease in the number shipped to other markets.

From the producer's standpoint the present marketing system is very unsatisfactory. One possible method of improving the situation would be the organization of marketing associations such as the California association, which is now in the experimental stage. Still another method would be to acquaint the stockmen on methods of marketing and market trends and to encourage the production of a higher class of product.



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