



## DAVE'S DAIRY

*The Adelaide Stock and Station Journal, 10 October 1945*

**Monday.** We had rather a nice rain over the weekend which will help things along a lot. The crops are looking very well indeed, and even Clarkson's mustard is starting to look like a crop. It certainly grows once it makes up its mind. We are certainly going to get plenty of hay; the trouble will be to find someone to buy it. Our local chaff merchant will only be able to buy a fraction of the hay offering in the district. A lot of the chaps down at the Bureau Conference seemed to think that the Hay Acquisition Committee ought to continue to function. If it doesn't -well, there will be no one to buy the hay that we are going to have in this district. That would be a pity if there are other districts that are going to be very short. Of course, if we don't sell it as hay we can sell it easy enough as grain, so we aren't very concerned.

It was too wet to plough so we got the ewes in, to have a look at the lambs. These have done very well lately, and the earlier ones are ready to go away. But it seems as if we are going to have plenty of feed, so I'm going to keep them for a while and see if I can get them really heavy.

**Tuesday.** Ploughing again today. Usually when I'm ploughing I button myself up nice and warm and make my mind a nice blank and just drive and drive until something goes click inside me and I say to myself, "Cripes, Dave, you're hungry!" and I stop for dinner. But I don't know whether it's Bob Herriot's example, or if it's the mental gymnastics necessary for me to read my new book. Anyhow, instead of just driving around and around, I now often find myself thinking. Sometimes I'm so busy thinking that I forget to turn at the corners and that makes me feel rather a goat, and I can't help hoping that Mary isn't watching. All the same, it's very interesting, thinking; I must do more of it. Of course, if Bob Herriot was ploughing he would think of different things to me. I suppose he would be wondering if he was ploughing on the contour, and if he was leaving the ground rough enough and then about all kinds of important problems. And I suppose Clarkson thinks about what a mess I'm making of things, and how he can improve me. And if by any remote chance Grandpa ever found himself ploughing, he'd get intense satisfaction by observing the orderly pattern of plough furrows and wheel marks. But not me. I just think in a chaotic kind of way. Perhaps I'll get better at it as I get more Practice.

Anyhow, today I started to dream about the wonderful crop I was going to get next year, and how I would spend the money and what about a refrigerator? Then I started to think about cold bottles, but stopped myself hurriedly and went back to thinking about refrigerators. Mary often thinks about refrigerators, too. Then I remembered what Clarkson told me, that before the war we could have bought them for £35 from Sweden if it wasn't for the customs duty. When I thought of this I found myself getting so hot that I had to take off my overcoat.

**Wednesday.** Ploughing still, and still thinking. By a rather devious route, I got to thinking about some of the things Mr Muirhead and Clarkson had told me on my trip to Baroota. I tried thinking about "homozygous sires" and "corrective mating" and "planes of nutrition", but this only made my head ache, so I stopped, and just thought about sheep. I remembered what Mr Muirhead said about using crossbred ewes for the mothers of export lambs. He was

telling me that he thought I ought to use a long-wool sire on my Merino ewes, and keep the live lambs to sell as breeding ewes a year later. I suppose it's all right, but I'm very doubtful if I would get much more for the long wool-cross ewe hoggets a year later than I'd get for the progeny of a short wool sire as lambs. If you can get a pound for a lamb at three months – well, you've got to get a good price for ewe hoggets to make it worthwhile. Clarkson said that Romney-Merino crosses would probably mate too late for the northern districts. He seemed to think that the Border Leicester-cross ewe would be better for our district. One problem would be that a chap would have to have jolly good fences to keep the crossbred ewe hoggets for a year.

**Thursday.** Still ploughing. I was a bit snappy to Mary last night, so she said that I'd better stop thinking for a day. She said that it's no good rushing these things. So after I got the tractor going nicely I switched my mind off and just went round and round in a most pleasant way. When I got hungry I had dinner; when the sun went down I stopped and went in for tea. After tea I washed up and am now writing this before going to bed. I'm sorry it's so dull, but dash it all; you can't expect a fellow to have a fresh idea every day.

**Friday.** Clarkson dragged me off to the local show today. He was taking some of his sheep over and got me to come along and give him a hand. On the way he took the opportunity to say a few well-chosen words on how I should behave. He told me again that I had to be careful how I criticised studs, particularly in the show ring. But, above all, he wanted me to be careful how I opened the wool on the Merinos/ He's showed me how it should be done before and I've been practising on the sly. I don't know why it should be so important, but Clarkson says that as soon as a dyed-in-the-wool Merino man sees a farmer opening up a fleece in the way most of us do, he goes away and has a stiff whisky and comes back later and straightens the fleece up again. I promised to be good.

When we got here we unloaded the sheep and put them in their right pens and I had time for a look around. There was a rather decent looking ram in the next pen, so I climbed over and he bunted me in the shins. As I caught him I noticed a grim-looking bloke leaning on the rail staring at me. As I started to open the fleece I felt this chap's eyes fairly boring through me, and I started to get flustered. I seemed to get a kind of St. Vitus' dance in my fingers. The chappie was still staring. I tried again and managed to open it up this time. I stared at it in a learned kind of way but when I turned round to say it was a nice ram, I saw the chap walking off in a determined way to the booth. When I was getting out of the pen the ram helped.

I couldn't help feeling that I hadn't done too well, so I went over to another part where there wasn't any audience. But as soon as I got into the pen and caught the sheep I happened to notice another grim-looking bloke leaning on the rail staring at me. So I made out I was just looking for the sheep's horns and got out again. Then I looked around till I found an absolutely deserted part of the sheep show. I climbed into the pen and then noticed out of the corner of my eye that there were two chaps leaning on the rail watching. Still, I wasn't going to be chivvied around anymore, so opened the fleece up good and proper. It looked as if it had had a late night by the time I'd finished. Still out of the corner of my eye, I could see those two blokes leaning on the rail, staring. I started to get angry, so I said loudly, "What a cow of a sheep!" When I looked up I saw one of the chaps was Clarkson, and then I realised it was Clarkson's sheep.

So I wandered down to have a look at the British breeds. This was better; these chaps don't know anything about opening up fleeces. I had a look at the wool on some Southdowns. \_ripes! I've often heard about these "Downs" breeds but never understood why they were so called until I had a look at their wool. That's about all it was: "down." I saw a whole lot of

chaps trimming their sheep up for judging. They weren't a very talkative lot, either, but I thought I had better strike up a conversation. I noticed one chap with a moustache something like my own, so talked to him. "Fine sheep," I says. "Clip, clip, clip," he goes. "A lot of sheep in," I say. "Clip, clip, clip," he goes. Cripes, I thought, he sure is communicative. "Got much competition?" I say, still trying. "Clip, clip, clip," he goes. I got sick of it then. "Take a bit more off the brute's shoulder," I snapped, "he's bare in the wither," and got for my life.

Clarkson gave me what-oh all the way home. He didn't get any prizes!