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Fencing Against Coyotes and Wolves.

Oklahoma
Colorado
Kansas

J. E. Lantry
May - Sept. 1900

At Lawton, Oklahoma, I found only two firms interested in the sheep business. The country is especially well adapted to sheep. Pasturage is good throughout the year, and water is abundant. The abundance of wolves (coyotes) seems to be the chief reason that so few sheep are kept. Herding is necessary, unless fences sufficiently cheap can be devised to protect the flocks.

Coyotes find good places of refuge in the Wichita Mountains, and in the Big Pasture six miles south of Lawton. From these places they make nightly raids upon poultry and other domestic animals in the vicinity. Of course, these form but a ^{small} part of their food, but it is probable that poultry is ^{consequently more} ~~usually~~ easily obtained than wild mammals. The Wichita Mountains have also some of the gray wolves remaining in them. Several were killed during last winter.

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V. E. Lundy

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One of the firms at Lawton engaged in the sheep business have their ranch about eight miles northeast of town. They have over a thousand head of grade sheep. These are herded in daytime and kept in corrals at night. They have had no losses from coyotes or wolves.

Mr. O. N. Brown, living five miles northwest of Lawton, has about 175 sheep, some of them pure bred Shropshires. His ranch lies just south of the west end of the Fort Hill Military Reserve, and his pasture extends nearly to the south line of the reservation. Across this pasture coyotes pass daily on their way to and from the valley of Wolf Creek. They are seen most commonly early in the morning or late in the evening, but sometimes in mid day.

A pond in the pasture affords them a place to drink, and they no doubt obtain some food - birds or frogs - in its vicinity.

Mr. Brown's sheep, while in the pasture,

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~~are~~ in constant charge of a boy herder, and are always corralled for the night in an enclosure near the house. The corral has large sheds to afford shelter from both heat and storm and the sheep are driven in ^{daily} to spend a few hours, at midday of the hottest part of summer.

The corral is of woven wire ^{on the average} with a six inch square mesh and only 26 inches in height. It has been sufficient for its purpose thus far, but this is probably because of its nearness to the house and the presence of watchful Collie dogs.

The surroundings being favorable, I made arrangements with Mr. Brown to co-operate with us in an experiment to test the efficiency of a woven wire corral erected at some distance from the house and in his pasture. The Biological Survey furnished the materials and paid for the labor of building the fence. Mr. Brown

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agreed to use the corral as a night enclosure for sheep and to report to us upon its efficiency whenever asked to do so.

The enclosure is ten rods square. It is built with posts about 20 feet apart and a woven wire with 5 inch triangular mesh and 35 inches high. Two barbed wires above, 5 inches apart, are ^{also} used. The woven wire fence was made by the Dillon-Priswood Wire Co. of Sterling, Illinois; and is called the 'Sterling Diamond Field Fence'.

Cost of fence, p. 4a

Some delay in getting the experiment under way was experienced, but ~~it~~ ^{the corral} was finished about August 20, and sheep were turned into it nightly thereafter. Sheep that are being fattened are now (Oct. 31, 1905) kept in the pen constantly.

At Apache, Oklahoma, I interviewed Mr. E. L. Napier, who keeps a considerable herd of sheep in the grass-covered foothills of the eastern extension of the Wichita Mountains.

Cost of Experimental Corral at Lawton, Oklahoma.

40 rods sterling diamond fence @ 25¢	10.00
Freight from Sterling to Lawton	3.21
100 rods hog wire and staples	3.38
30 post oak spitposts	3.00
Extra lumber for braces, corner posts, & gate	4.00
Labor and hauling (5 miles)	<u>9.00</u>
Total	\$32.59

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1925.

Pasturage is excellent, but to prevent close pasturing in any part of the range, Mr. Napier uses movable corrals and changes them from place to place at short intervals by hauling them on a wagon.

The corrals when built are circular in shape and each consists of three sections of ^{woven wire} about 150 feet long and 4 feet wide. The woven wire is firmly stapled to flat strips of pecan wood, 1x2 inches and slightly over four feet long. These are fastened at intervals of 4 or 5 feet. Wires are attached at each end of these strips.

The fence is stretched from the outside of the corral by attaching the loose ends of the wires of each upright strip to the same peg, driven firmly into the ground. This keeps the fence close to the ground, tightly stretched and always in a vertical position.

The woven wire used for these corrals

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is known as the Elwood Sawu Fence. It is 48 inches high and has 5 inch triangular meshes. This fence is heavier than is required for its purpose and more expensive than is practical for extensive coyote proof fencing. In all other respects it satisfies every requirement.

Mr. Napier herds his sheep in the daytime, and while coyotes are abundant in the neighborhood of his pastures, he has had no losses from their depredations, except in a few cases where individual sheep strayed from the herd or were accidentally left outside the night corrals.

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1905

At Hugo, Colorado, I met a number of growers of sheep. All of them were cheerful over the prospects of the sheep business. High prices then prevailing had led some of them to sell their stock pretty closely, so that probably a minimum number ^{of sheep} were then on the range. The sheep ranges are all at distances of 20 to 40 miles back from the railroad, and an association of growers maintains a large public shearing shed at Hugo. The heaviest owners of sheep are of Scotch and Irish descent. Many of them, on first coming to Colorado, engaged with other sheep growers in the capacity of herders. After several years of such employment they gradually acquired herds of their own. The free range of public lands assisted much in giving them a start, but at present nearly all own large holdings of private lands.

The lands are not fenced, and herding is necessary both to keep the flocks to-

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D. E. Huntz
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gether and prevent depredations of wild animals — particularly coyotes and gray wolves. Coyotes are abundant and fond of lambs. Gray wolves, although not abundant, are much more formidable as individuals, and if herds were not carefully watched would do much damage.

On all the large sheep ranches in this section a number of corrals are built for night protection of the herds. Formerly, board corrals were in favor, and many of them are still used because they give shelter from storms. Experience, has proved that coyotes will dig under board corrals more readily than under a woven metal fence. The boards, when put on horizontally will also afford foot hold at the cracks, for the feet of the wolves and enable them to scale the fence.

For summer corrals woven wire fencing and a kind of picket fence with pickets

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W. E. Lantz
1905

woven fast to twisted wire cables are now superseding the board corrals. Both kinds are made four feet in height, and each has generally been satisfactory.

In discussing with these men, the desirability of fencing the pastures with coyote proof fencing, they all agreed upon the advantages but feared the cost of the fence would be much more than the cost of herding. When told that a coyote-proof fence could be built for less than \$150 per mile, several of them said that they would build the fence as soon as possible for enclosing small pastures for ewes at lambing time. All of them agreed upon the necessity of doing this eventually.

In the present experience of these men—they are intelligent and well-trained flock masters—the system of keeping sheep in corrals is very injurious to the pastures for the grass is all killed out in

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J. E. Fultz
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the immediate vicinity of the enclosures. Fencing the pastures would prevent much of this permanent injury to the grass.

As to losses from coyotes and wolves nearly all the men interviewed had some ^{personal} experience to relate. A few years ago a coyote "dugged" under one ^{board} corral, and the sheep inside stampeded to the other side of the pen. A low place caught some of the flock and the others piled on top of them so that 164 were smothered to death. They were all ewes heavy with young.

Among the sheep growers interviewed at Hugo were Hector Mathewson, L. M. Laurie, A. McIntyre, H. W. Gardner, James Will, Wm Clifford ^{L. E. Foote,} and F. Colson. These have all flocks ranging from 2000 to 10,000 head. Duncan Mathewson of Matteson, P. O. Colorado, a brother of Hector Mathewson has also about 10,000 sheep.

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D. E. Kauff

1905

At Byers, Colorado, the conditions as to coyote protection are similar to those at Hugo. - C. S. Owens, H. A. Snow, C. J. Parrot, and H. C. Carry are leading sheep growers, each with 2,500 to 10,000 sheep. All have had losses from coyotes which, if prevented, would have left more profit in the business ^{of growing sheep,} in former years.

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J. E. Lantry
1905.

At Kinsley, Kansas, only one man, Mr. Howard Carter, has recently been engaged in the sheep business. In spite of heavy losses of lambs from coyotes, he has regarded the business as a profitable investment and will continue it. Last spring coyotes killed about 35 lambs from his flock. The sheep are kept on a quarter section of fine level pasture, and are driven to the corral at the farm buildings at night. The flock - less than 200 - is too small to require a herder. The pasture is surrounded by a barbed wire fence of six strands, the lower ones about five inches apart. Coyotes enter the enclosure at low points under the lower wire of the fence.

The prevalence of coyotes, the location with regard to nearest dwellings, the level condition of the pasture, and the evident

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D. E. Kaubz.

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need of better protection for this flock, combine to make this an ideal place to test the practicability of a fence such as the smaller one built at Lawton, Oklahoma, for permanent protection from coyotes. Mr. Carter agreed to build a fence such as I suggested, using the excellent posts already set in place and three strands of his present fence to supplement that furnished by the Survey.

Two strands of the barbed wire would be placed above the ^{three foot} woven fence and the other on the ground at the outside of the posts. The expense of the experiment would be \$204.80 for the fence laid down at Kinsley - if the Dillon-Griswold Sterling Fence is used. The estimate is 32 cents per rod including freight of nearly 9 cents per rod from Sterling, Illinois to Kinsley, Kansas.