

Carding

In early times cards consisted of burrs held in place by strips of leather mounted on small boards with handles at one side. These were replaced when metal cards of American manufacture were procurable at the trading posts. When a weaver is ready to card her wool, she first loosens it by hand, then combs it between carding tools until

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is ready to be hand spun, but many of the weavers think it is too costly. Where there are a number of weavers in a given area, it is hoped that they will unite to improve their weaving wool for their own looms. The benefit they would receive would repay them many times over.

So much Rambouillet blood had been introduced into the Navaho flocks by 1936, to satisfy the demands ^{of both traders and buyers} ~~for~~ commercial wool, that the type of wool needed by the weavers was in danger of extinction. But the Rambouillet sheep, though heavier and better meat producers, did not thrive on the reservation pasturage. To meet this situation, the Department of Agriculture commenced a project at Fort Wingate, ^{known as the Sheep Breeding Laboratory} under the direction of J.O. Grandstaff, to develop a breed of sheep that would have the conformation of the Rambouillet and the wool quality of the old Navaho sheep, and at the same time have the ability to subsist on ~~xxx~~ scanty vegetation and limited water such as exists over so much of the reservation.

During the more than twenty five years since its inception, this laboratory has succeeded in fulfilling its purpose. Not only has the ^{mutton} ~~comformation~~ ^{subistence} been achieved while retaining the hardness of the sheep, but also it ^{the quality of} as actually improved the wool. During part of this time, the Bureau of Indian Affairs was working with the laboratory, endeavoring to interest the Navaho in improving their flocks. To accomplish this it was necessary to keep these new sheep separated from other stock, and this proved to be a very difficult matter to accomplish. Wherever Navaho breeders would agree to this program, they were loaned three bucks of this new breed. The Bureau, however, did not have the personnel, nor did the laboratory to do this much needed field work. The Navaho themselves as yet have not shown sufficient interest in the project. Perhaps ~~it~~ followed too closely on the sheep reduction program for them to realize what the benefits really were. The Sheep Breeding Laboratory still exists, furnishing bucks to ^a ~~xxx~~ few Navaho and Zuni sheep breeders, and at present the Laboratory has about one thousand head of this new breed. What seems to be needed is an effort on the part of the Navaho themselves to profit from this long experiment. The Laboratory sells wool from these sheep to the Arts and Crafts Guild, ~~which has~~ already been processed