

Shortgrass Area Shearing Season In Full Swing

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MERTZON — A big portion of the Shortgrass County has rocked along 190 days without a big rain. In these places the countryside has had ample time to mature into a perfect sun-cured condition. What vegetation that remains is considered to be immune to any flora killing elements.

Shearing crews have reappeared on the roadways lately. The annual mad rush to gather the woolies is about to get underway. Soon the ranchers will be tearing off in all directions harvesting the wool crop.

This shearing season seems different from the 10 preceding ones. There's a widely circulated impression that all types of shearing labor is in larger supply.

According to the coffee house grapevine, one ranch on the western edge of the Shortgrass County already has a lead on a day worker. At the last account (and this is being followed very closely), the rancher is purported to have said that it looked as if a trade would be made just as soon as such items as mid-work vacation periods and after-lunch cash bonus programs were defined.

The shearing contractors also indicate their labor problems have eased a bit. Unconfirmed reports claim that a sizable working force is languishing around the country's one employment agency. If this be true, the capitans are practically assured of picking up a few men who would enjoy a day or two in the country.

After several seasons of using labor recruiting methods that would barely pass the outside limits of the federal kidnapping law, it is exciting for us to think that volunteer workers may again be available.

Another encouraging factor is the increase in young sheep shearers. Where once the machines were staffed by older men, quite a number of the sheep peelers who completed their apprentice work in the early 1920s are back on the job.

In view of these promised improvements, the only thing we have to fear is a rainy spell. If it gets to raining during shearing, we're sunk.

You see, the sheep shearers will utilize the interruption to scatter worse than a bunch of college kids at a beach party during the full of the moon. The sheep flocks will break up into groups of two or three head. The saddlehorses will all get tender-footed. And if the rancher's help doesn't run off to town, they will develop an appetite that would tax the best run boarding house in the nation.

But regardless of the weather, it's heartening to see what could be a change in the shearing pattern. Who knows, this might be the opening of a new era in the ranch roundup scene. And whatever happens, it can't be much worse than what's been going on for the past several years.