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Farm butchering—slaughtering, skinning and dressing

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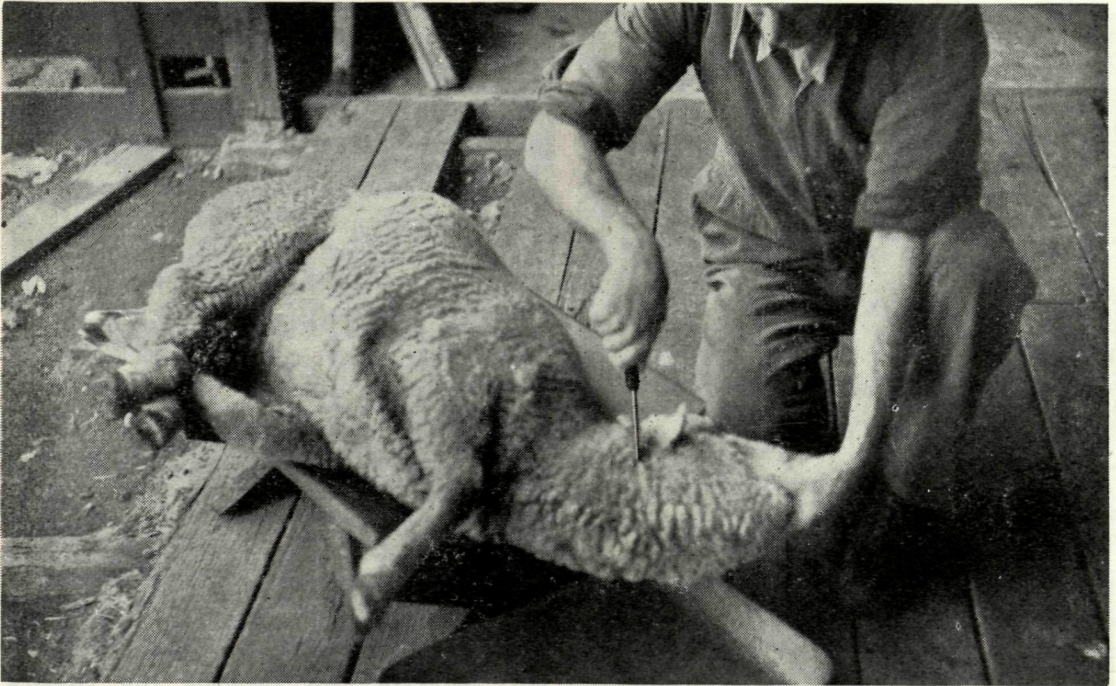


Fig. 1.—Position of knife when sticking. The point enters just behind the base of the jawbone and the edge of the knife is facing towards the front of the neck.

FARM BUTCHERING

SLAUGHTERING, SKINNING AND DRESSING A SHEEP

By H. P. DWYER, Sheep Husbandry Instructor, Muresk Agricultural College

THE slaughtering and dressing of sheep for the domestic meat supply is a constantly recurring farm chore. Never a pleasant task, it is often made unduly arduous by lack of skill on the part of the operator. It is hoped that this picture-story will point the way to a quicker, cleaner performance, with the attendant benefits of better meat and higher skin prices.

Very little equipment is needed, other than a sharp knife, a gambrel and a hoist of some kind. A slaughtering cradle is an advantage, but not a necessity.

The knife should be a sharp-pointed "sticking knife" and it should be honed to a razor-edge and kept really sharp. Butchers soon develop the habit of giving their knives a few quick touches on the steel after each few cutting strokes, and the farmer could well follow their example. If you

have not learnt the knack of handling the steel, at least spend a little time with an emery wheel and oilstone to ensure that your knife is kept keen-edged.

A curved skinning knife, in addition to the sticking knife, is worth having, but as the knife should be used as little as possible when skinning a sheep, most farmers will find the sticking knife adequate for their needs.

SLAUGHTERING

Sheep for slaughter should be yarded early and given ample time to rest and cool off before killing. This results in better meat with improved keeping qualities.

The sheep is laid on its left side in the cradle. The operator stands behind it so that he can draw back the head, holding the lower jaw with his left hand. (Fig. 1.)

Before picking up the knife, the beginner should feel with the fingers of the right hand to locate the space between two of the neck vertebrae just above the base of the jawbone.

Once the position is known, it is a simple matter to locate it in future by a light pressure with the back of the knife. Having found the spot the knife is tipped forward so that it is vertical with the point downward and the sharp edge facing away from the operator and towards the sheep's throat.

Sticking is done with a quick downward pressure so that the knife passes through the neck. Cut forward about an inch to ensure that the main blood vessels are



Fig. 2.—The clenched right fist is placed on the nape of the neck and a strong upward pull with the left hand breaks the neck.

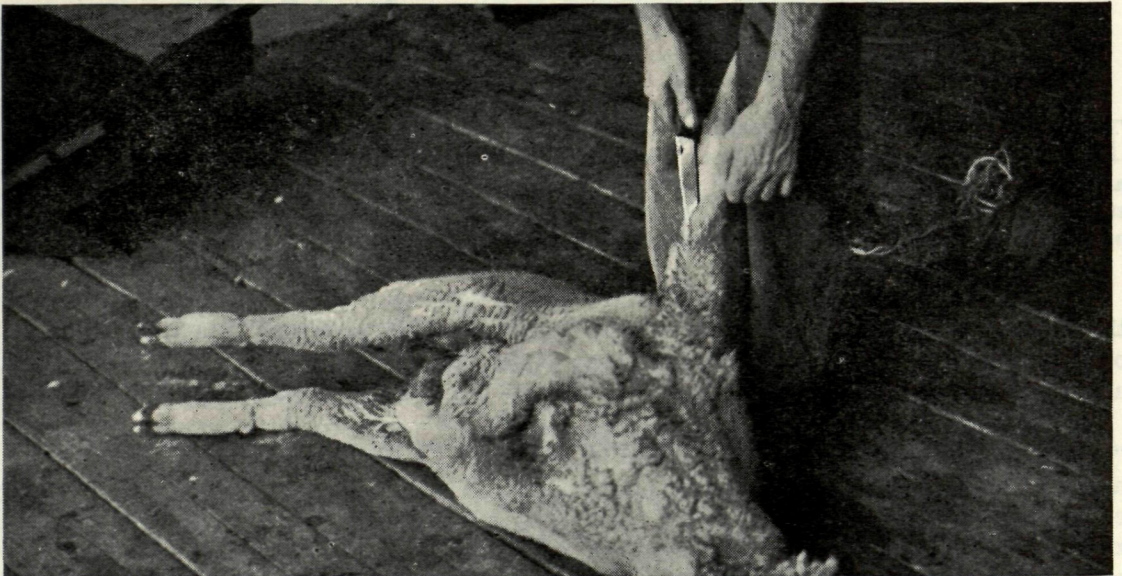


Fig. 3.—Opening up the first foreleg.

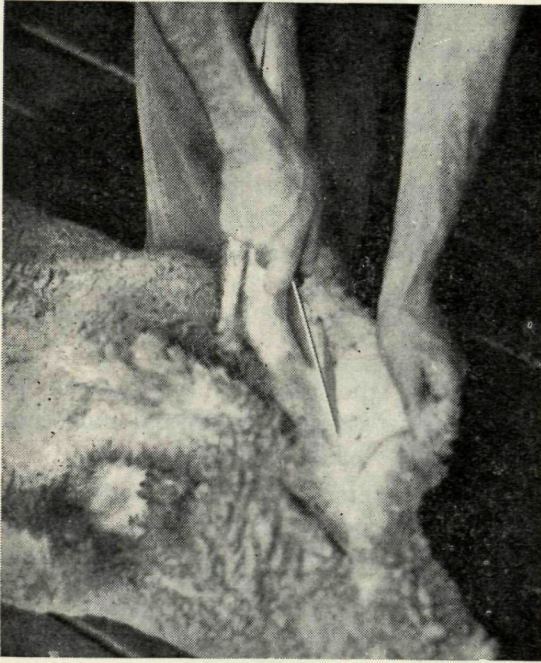


Fig. 4.—Open up sufficient skin to “fist” off the skin down around the point of the shoulder. Repeat on other foreleg.

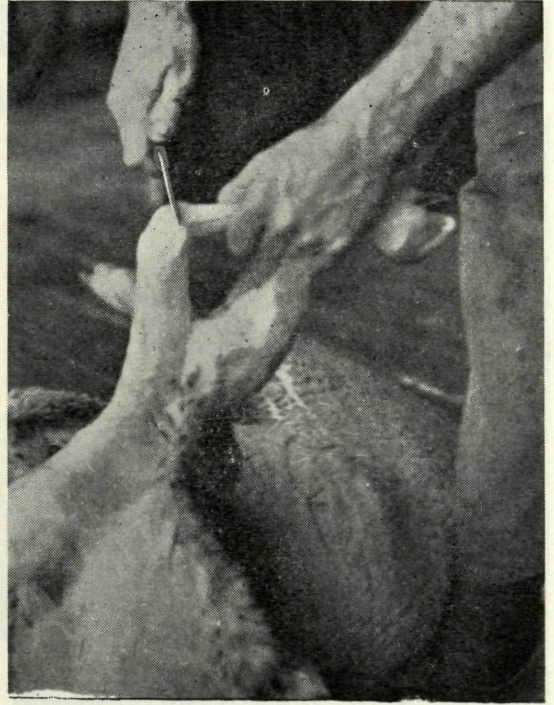


Fig. 5.—Cutting the foreleg joint.

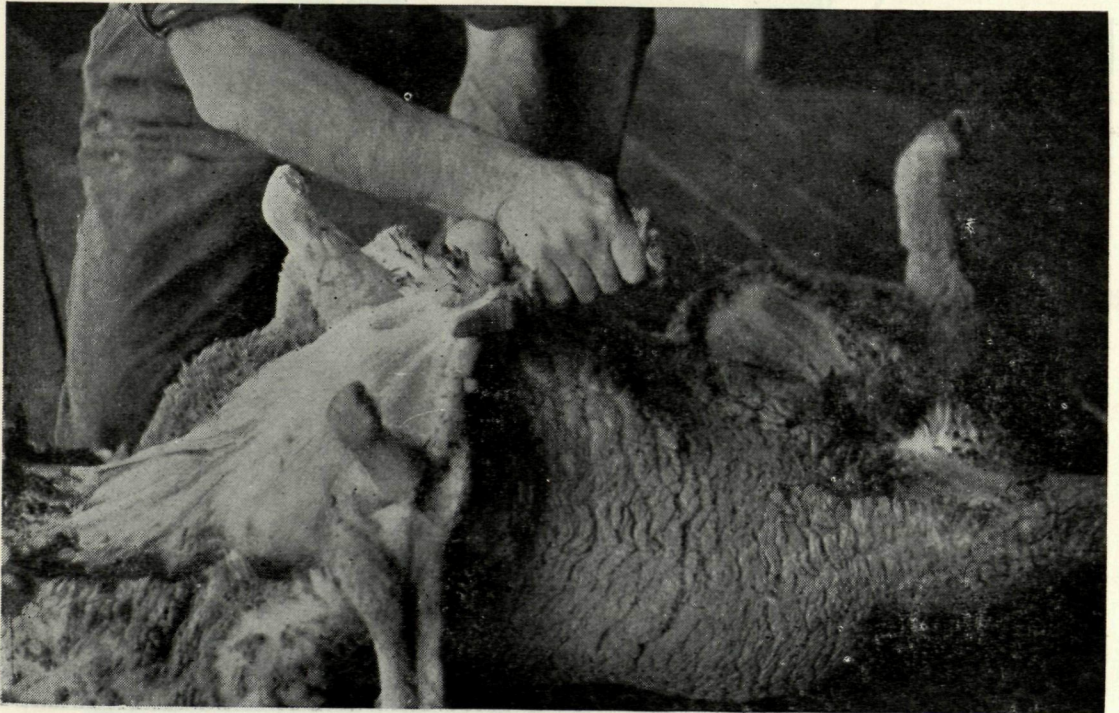


Fig. 6.—Skinning the brisket.

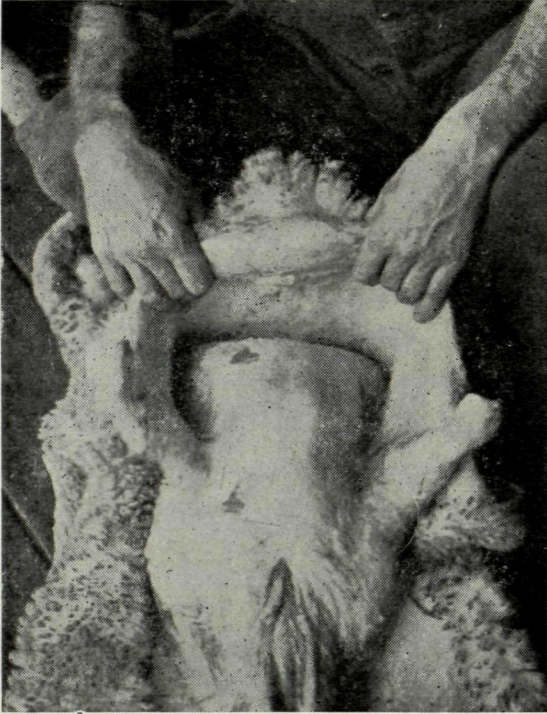


Fig. 7.—After skinning the forelegs and brisket, the skin is "fisted" off the belly to a depth of a foot or more.

severed, then turn the knife and cut back to the spinal column in the space between the vertebrae.

Lay down the knife and place the clenched fist on the nape of sheep's neck. Press down strongly, at the same time pulling the head up smartly with the left hand, to break the neck and ensure a quick and painless death. (Fig. 2.) A touch of the knife at this stage will sever the exposed spinal cord.

Breaking the neck is compulsory in slaughtering sheep—the animal must not be allowed to bleed to death.

Many farmers cut right through to the front of the neck after sticking, but this is not necessary and tends to cause a large area of the neck wool to become blood-stained.

SKINNING

Forelegs.—Lay the animal on the floor on its left side and stand facing towards the head with the feet close to the sheep's

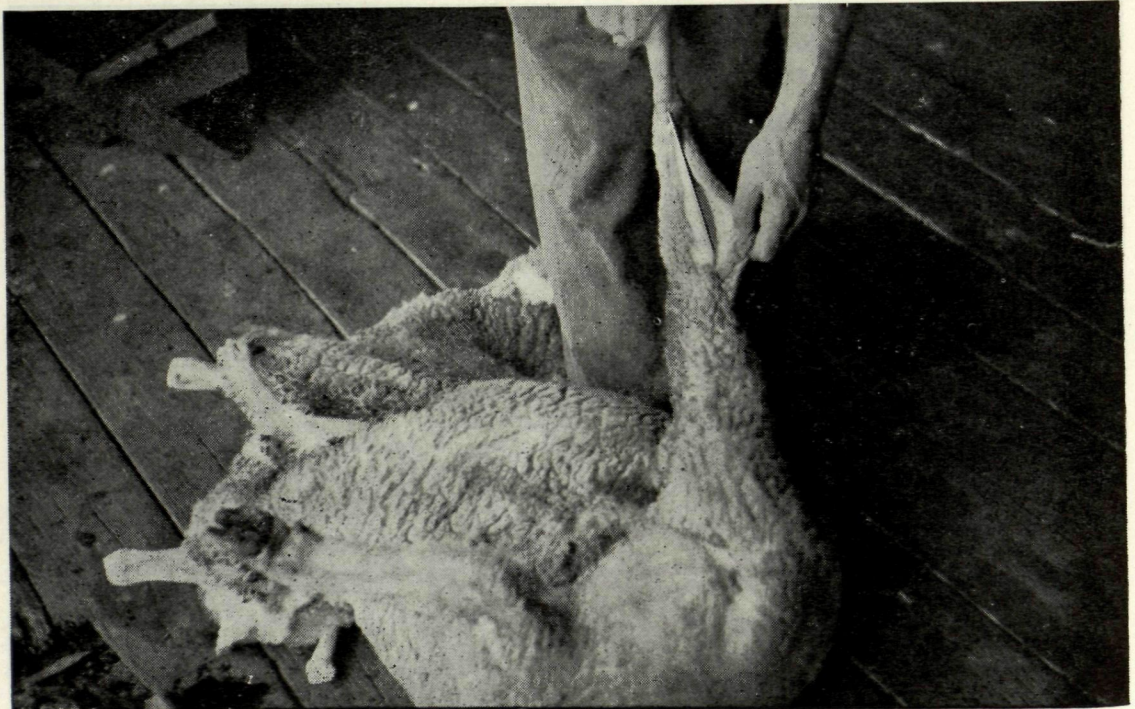
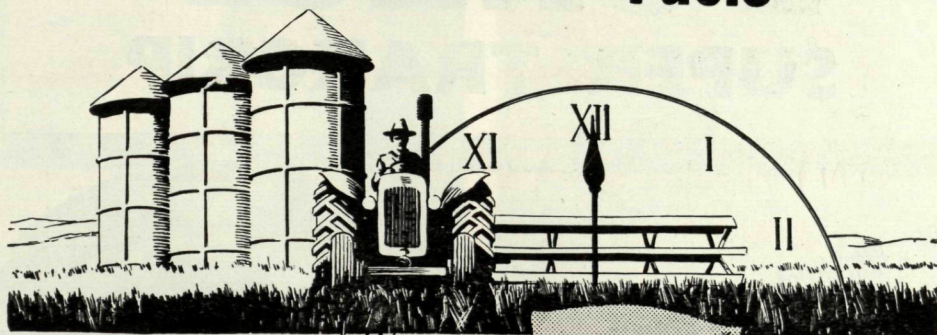
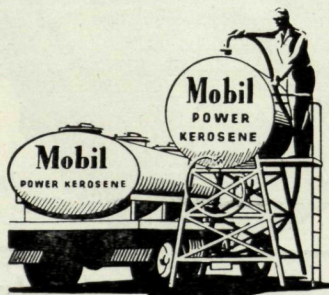


Fig. 8.—Opening up the hind leg.

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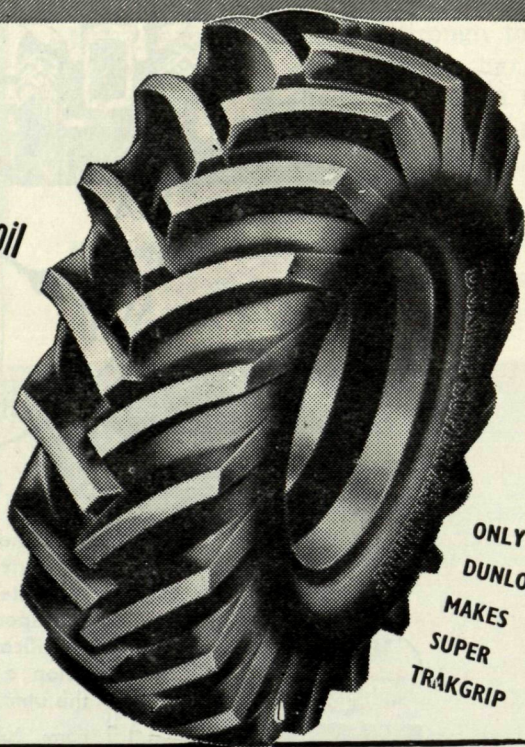
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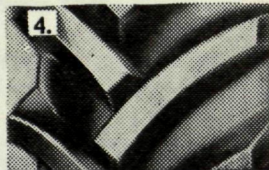
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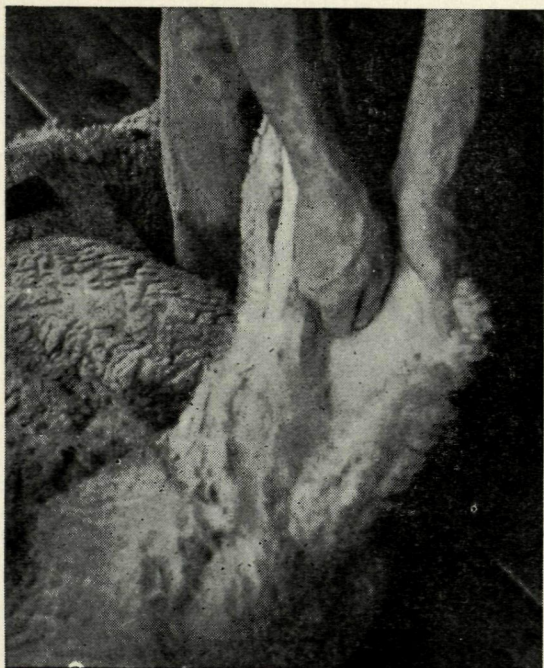


Fig. 9.—“Fisting off” the skin of the hind leg.

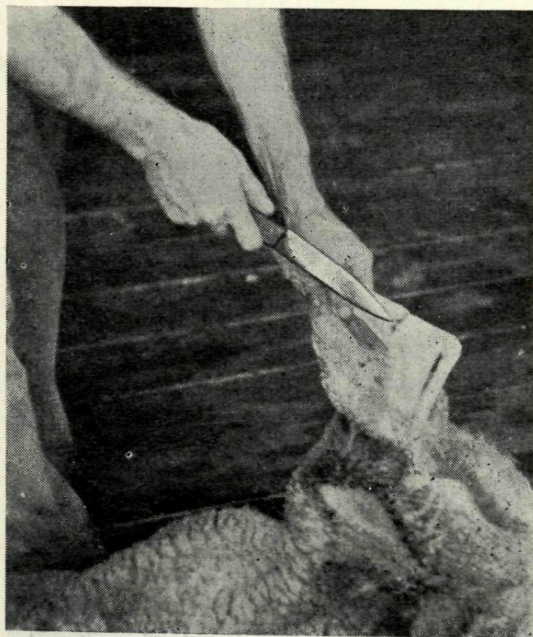


Fig. 10.—The point of the knife indicates the position of the cut through the joint. Break with a sideways pressure.

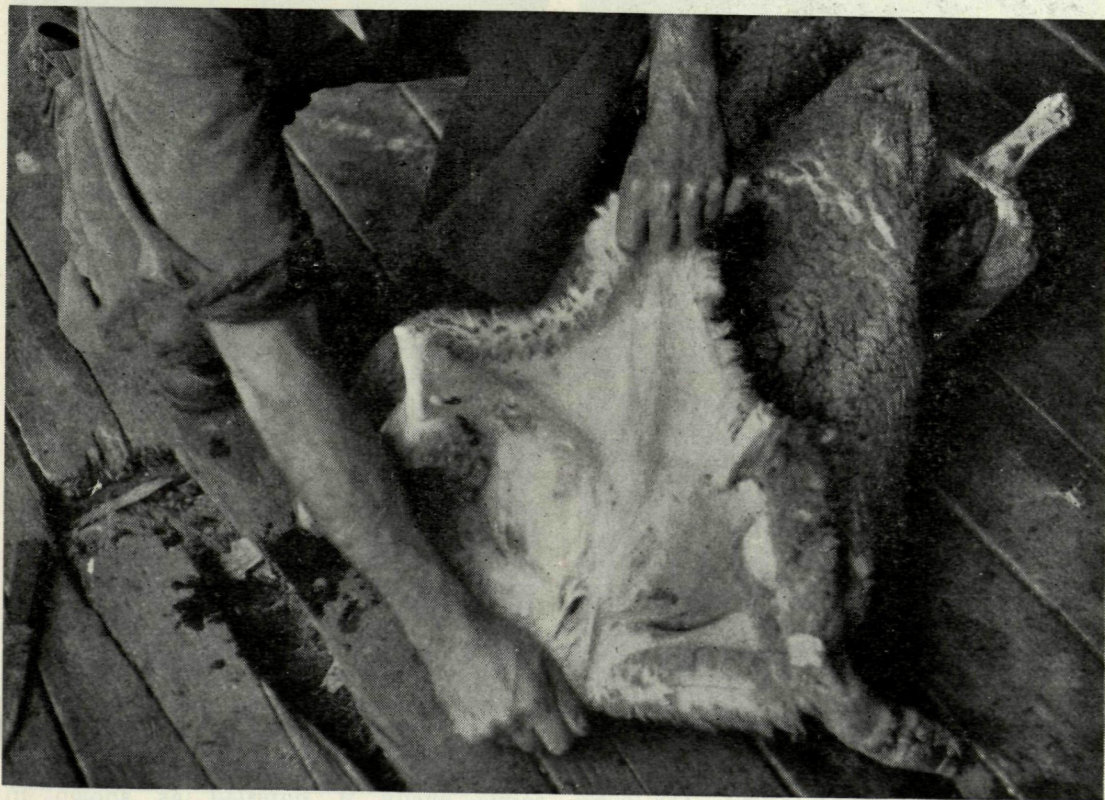


Fig. 11.—When both hind legs are skinned and skin freed from the vent, hold the tail in one hand and pull skin free from flanks.

back. Pick up the top foreleg and hold the foot between the knees so that both hands are free.

Open up the skin just below the knee (Fig. 3) and run the knife straight down to the point of the brisket and then along the centre of the throat to the point of the chin. Keep the point of the knife inclined slightly upward to avoid cutting into the flesh.

Use the knife as little as possible in freeing the leg—in fact at all stages of the skinning—and where it is used keep it well out on the skin about an inch from the flesh. Free the skin on the inside of the leg first, then insert the clenched fist

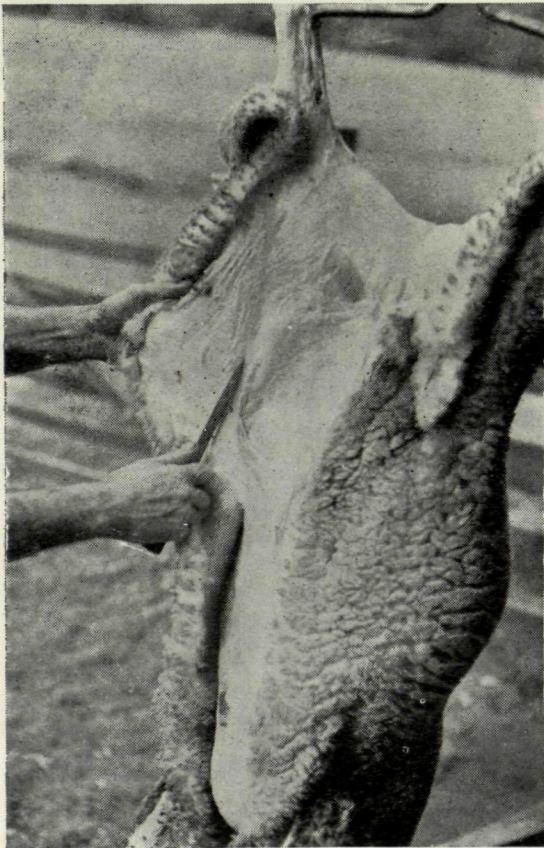


Fig. 12.—The carcass is placed on the gambrel and skin opened down centre-line of belly. Pull carcass to one side so that its weight keeps the skin taut as flanks are freed by careful use of the knife. Keep knife well out on skin.



Fig. 13.—Push carcass away from you when freeing opposite flank.

against the skin and press with a twisting motion towards the flesh to free the skin. Free sufficient skin with the knife to permit the skin to be “fisted” off in the same manner on the outside of the leg, working off the point of the shoulder and down the side of the neck (Fig. 4).

Cut the foreleg joint (Fig. 5) and free the foreleg, then repeat the process on the other foreleg.

Brisket.—With both forelegs freed from the skin, loosen the skin at the point of the brisket. The skin is usually very firmly attached at this point, but will come away fairly easily if handled as shown in Fig. 6.

The skin at the point of the brisket is held in the right hand, with the left hand underneath to serve as a fulcrum. A rolling movement will usually detach the skin along the brisket, and the skin along the sides of the chest can then be "fisted" off using the clenched fist with a screwing or twisting motion which frees the attachments between skin and flesh.

The "fisting" is continued across the belly from side to side until the skin is freed to a depth of several inches (Fig. 7).



Fig. 14.—Fist off the skin keeping well behind the shoulders.

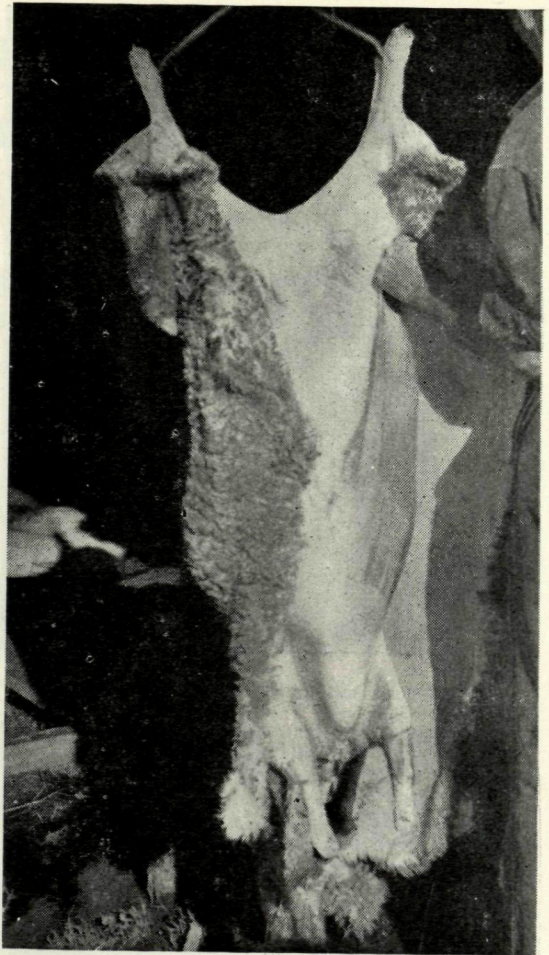


Fig. 15.—Continue fisting upward to clear hind legs.

Hind Legs.—Move to the hind legs and handle in a similar manner to the fore-legs. Open the skin near the hock and cut down in a straight line to the bare area under the tail.

Using the knife carefully, free the skin on the outside of the leg (Fig. 8). On the inside merely free the skin around the joint.

Now continue "fisting" the skin from the flesh (Fig. 9) until the leg is exposed. Cut through the joint below the hock and break off with a sideways pressure. Slip the knife through the thin membrane between the leg and the "hamstring" to admit the gambrel (Fig. 10).

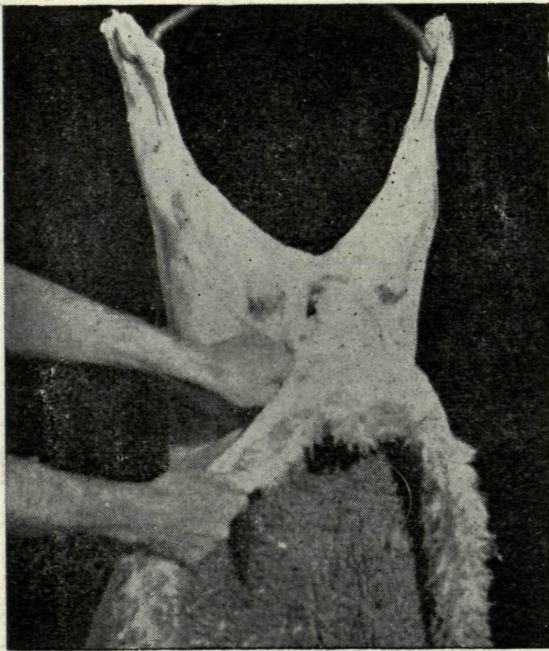


Fig. 16.—Free tail and rump in same manner.

Repeat the process on the other hind leg, and then, using the knife carefully, free the skin from the underside of the tail and round the vent. Hold the tail in one hand and it will then be easy to pull the skin free of the flanks (Fig. 11).

The carcass is now ready for the gambrel to be inserted preparatory to hoisting. Before hoisting, open up the front of the neck and free the windpipe and gullet from the head. The gullet or food channel is attached to the rear of the windpipe. Cut off a section of the windpipe and tie a knot in the gullet to prevent the contents of the paunch or rumen from running out when the carcass is hoisted.

With the carcass hanging at a convenient height, use the knife carefully to free the skin from the tail.

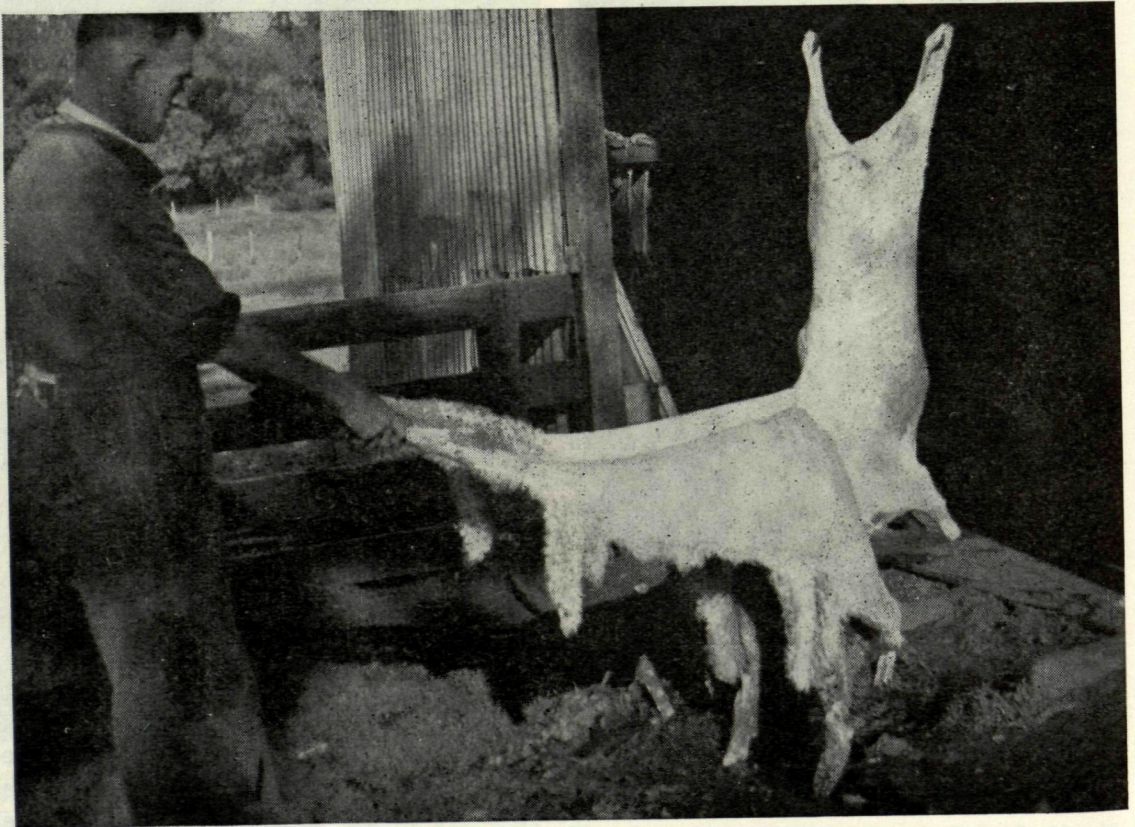


Fig. 17.—A strong outward pull will strip the skin down to the neck.

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Open the skin down the centre-line of the belly, then proceed to free the skin from the flanks using the knife. This operation is simplified if the skin is grasped firmly in the left hand and the carcass pulled towards the operator so that its weight keeps the skin taut (Fig. 12).

The knife is kept well out on the skin, about an inch or more from the flesh, and a few light touches will allow the skin to pull free. On the opposite side, push the skin away so that the carcass is out of the perpendicular again (Fig. 13) and free the opposite flank.

With both flanks freed, continue "fisting" off the skin working diagonally downward and toward the backbone, keeping well back behind the shoulder to free the fore-legs (Fig. 14).

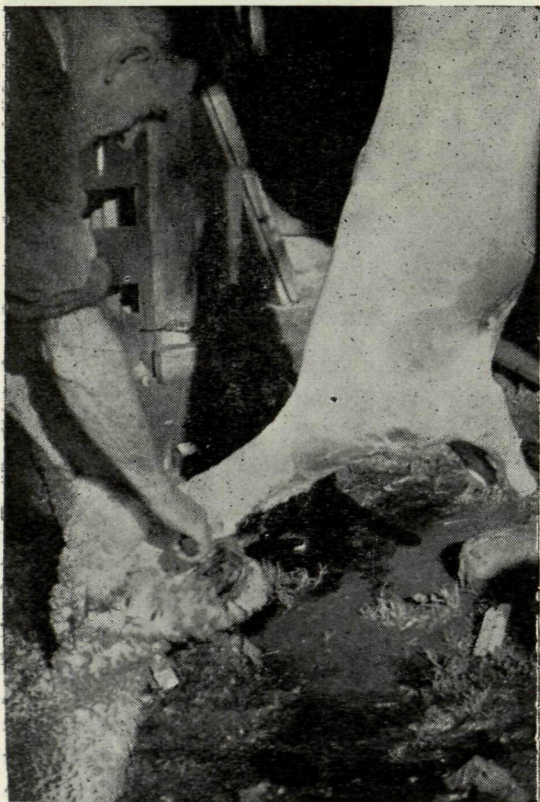


Fig. 18.—Cut skin free from head leaving the ears on the skin.



Fig. 19.—Opening up the carcass.

Continue the "fisting" off in an upward direction to free the hind legs (Fig. 15) and then work upward and across the back to free the tail and rump (Fig. 16).

Seize the two hind feet and a smart outward pull will now strip the skin clear of the back right down to the head (Fig. 17). The ears must be left on the skin which is now cut free from the head (Fig. 18).

Hang the skin, flesh upward over a rail in the shade to dry, and then return to the carcass and remove the head. If the neck has been broken correctly, this should be a simple matter.

DRESSING

Two semi-circular strokes with the knife will free the vent and hind gut, allowing them to drop into the abdomen. Cut down to the bone between the hind legs, then starting from the cod, or udder in the case of a ewe, open up the carcass down the centre line to the point of the brisket. Insert two fingers in the opening as soon as there is room for them (Fig. 19), keeping



Fig. 20.—Throw small intestines over to left and remove caul fat.



Fig. 21.—Cutting through the brisket.

them just ahead of the knife to avoid cutting the paunch which will fall forward.

Remove the caul fat from around the paunch and throw the small intestines over to the left (Fig. 20) so that the caul may be detached easily.

Detach the hind gut by pulling forward and slightly upward and allow it to hang down.

The abdominal organs are attached to the backbone in two places, one just below the kidneys and the other near the liver. A touch of the knife at each point will free the "innards," after which the hand can be slid down to lift them out—another touch of the knife being sufficient to free the gullet or oesophagus.

Now place the left forearm crosswise in the body cavity (Fig. 21) to spread the carcass and cut or chop through the brisket. Continue downward and open up the neck.

Two semi-circular cuts through the diaphragm (Fig. 22) will expose the heart, and lungs which, with the liver, are freed

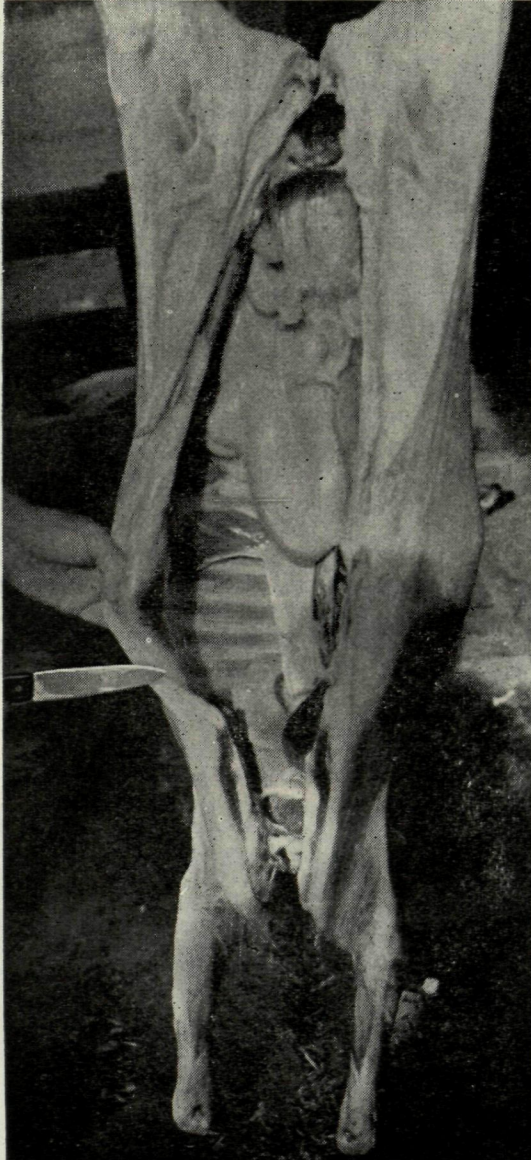


Fig. 22.—Two semi-circular cuts through the diaphragm expose the heart and lungs.

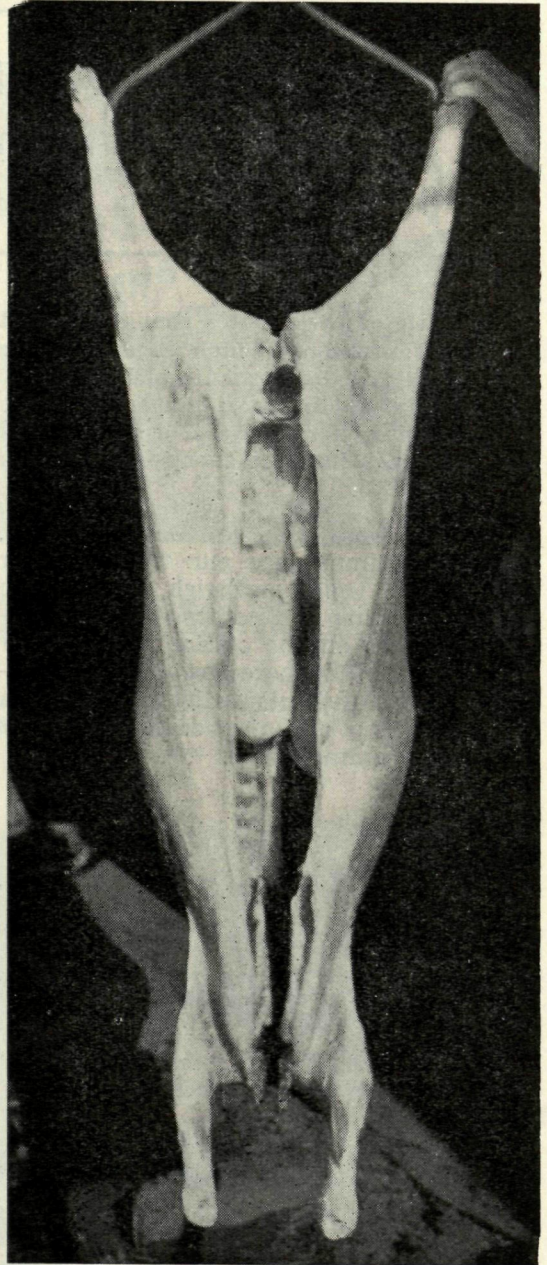


Fig. 23.—The carcass dressed and ready for cutting when cooled.

from their attachments and removed by a downward and outward pull.

The carcass should now be wiped down and placed in a cool spot to "set." If these instructions have been followed carefully it should present the attractive appearance shown in Fig. 23.