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## “Everyone breeds sheep more or less”

by Graham Brazier

Or, so said Hornby Island farmer George Heatherbell in 1902 as he was quoted in the “Seventh Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of British Columbia”. Regrettably, the views of Denman Island farmers were not recorded in the 243 page document. However as the colourfully, and at times awkwardly, worded review of the year’s farming practices on Hornby Island may be of interest to the Denman Island farming community it is reproduced below with full awareness that the concluding lines will be offensive to modern-day readers.

### “REPORT OF MR. GEO. HEATHERBELL, HORNBY ISLAND

GENERAL DESCRIPTION — All, or nearly all, soils below [the] mountain are good. Cumberland nearest market, Nanaimo next. Steamboat service (S.S. City of Nanaimo). Roads are fairly good. School. Plenty deer, blue grouse, and salmon in Lambert Channel. Population, about 50 souls. South-west beach is a noted place for marine fossils. The ranchers number about a dozen, and the area of cultivated land is about 400 acres.

WHEAT— There is not much wheat grown, but what is is good. All grown for chicken feed; I think it would be better to feed it to stock. No frosts, no pests. Mammoth Italian chiefly grown here; it took first diploma at Paris Exposition and at Glasgow also. Spring wheat is mostly grown all for feed.

OATS are the main grain crop, all for feed. Good crops; no trouble with pests.

BARLEY — none grown; but has been tried and does well.

PEAS do well. I prefer Golden Vine. All fed on farms.

MANGOLDS do well, when properly cared for. Not much grown.

TURNIPS do well. I grow 1 1/2 to 2 acres and get large crops. Hall Westbury, Sutton’s Champion and New Ontario are the varieties. I get best results by planting from 1st to 15th of June.

GRASSES AND CLOVERS — Following are the principal varieties grown: — Red alsike and white clover, timothy, orchard and red top grasses. I don’t like timothy for pasture.

INDIAN CORN — my experience is that it can be successfully grown for ensilage here. I prefer oats and peas for soiling so long as I can cut them green.

RAPE is excellent, sown on rich land, well cultivated and sown in drills not too thick. Have experimented with it three years and find it good even for cows, but a little difficult to carry off to feed, but is alright to feed on the land, especially to sheep or pigs.

APPLES — The following are successfully grown: Yellow Transparent, Astrachan, Duchess of Oldenburg, Wealthy, Gravenstein, Swaar, Baldwin, Pewaukee, Spy. Not very good crops in 1901; abundant in 1902. Cold, late spring. I should say about 2,000 trees on the Island. I like the \*No. 1 spray best [\*No. 1 spray described as ‘Winter Spray for Woolly Aphis and Scale Insects. 30 lbs. of Lime, unslacked, 20 lbs. of sulphur, powdered, 15 lbs., of Salt, coarse and 60 gals. of water]

BOARD OF HORTICULTURE — I believe the Board is doing good work, and hope they will receive every encouragement.

DAIRYING — Private dairying is profitable if a first-class quality of butter is made. Not much carried on here outside of myself.

SUMMER FEED FOR DAIRY CATTLE — This is a problem I would like to solve. Oats and peas mixed, as long as they can be sown and cut before they harden up, is my best feed. A strip sown every two weeks will give feed to the end of August. Then I plow up same in September and sow rape and get a good bite for sheep.

SHEEP — This district is suitable for sheep-raising, but it would be better if we had less rain in winter. Everyone breeds sheep more or less, mostly Shropshire grades, which I believe are the best. I believe sheep pay better than cattle, supposing they are confined strictly on the farm, on the islands, at least. Ruling price 4 1/2 to 5c per lb. live weight, and wool 6 1/2c. There is something wrong with the price given for wool.

POULTRY — This line has not been taken up with any system; each one keeps a few hens. It is a profitable branch of the farm. "Black Minorca" is best, in my opinion. Prices from 20 to 45 cents during the year. For the year we sold \$230 worth of eggs from 110 hens (Minorcas), including four dozen chickens. They got ordinary farm care and all the feed raised on the farm. There are no diseases of animals in this district.

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION — I am decidedly of opinion that something could be done in that respect, and good would come of it.

FARMERS' INSTITUTES — Unfortunately, our community is too small to take advantage of the benefits of an Institute. The two islands, Denman and Hornby, could do so, if got together and were unanimous.

FERTILIZERS — Barnyard manure is used and cared for in the old way.

CLEARING LAND — I recommend the use of stumping powder every time. Then pull out pieces with heavy blocks and heavy team. I believe nothing would give encouragement to farmers on timber lands to go ahead clearing up more than cheap powder, and no doubt it was a great disappointment, to say the least, to a large number when we did not get it for about 7 cents per lb. as we were led to believe we would.

DRAINING — Underdraining is not carried out in this district; too costly with wood. Drain pipes would be very much the cheapest and best in every way, if they could be procured at a reasonable price and low freight, or, better still, manufactured on the spot.

PECUNIARY ASSISTANCE — I believe cheap powder would do more good, in a way, than pecuniary assistance.

LANDS — No Government land. Improved farms can be bought from \$10 to \$50 an acre.

LABOUR — Whites, \$25 per month; Japanese, \$15 per month. Labour scarce sometimes."

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