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Cumberland

SHEEP EPIDEMIC - SHEPHERDS ACT

Disaster threatens in John Peel's country, as Southern Lakeland sees the biggest round-up in history, following a reported outbreak of sheep scab. The mountains of Emmerdale echo the flock master's call ...

A deadline is set for 35,000 sheep to be driven in after the long months grazing on the open hillside. Carried out under police supervision, the operation is ordered at a critical hour for shepherds. If the outbreak reaches the pitch of an epidemic, consequences may be dire, since the lambing season is near. From Britain's loveliest peaks - Pillar Rock, Great Gable, Scafell Pike - the semi-wild Herdwick sheep are gathered into pens to await inspection by Ministry vets.

A dip in time may yet save thousands of sheep, otherwise doomed to compulsory destruction. Many flocks, decimated by the great winter freeze-up of two years ago, have only now begun to recover their numbers. At stake is a valuable source of wool and food for the nation, besides the livelihood of scores of small shepherd-farmers. In this war-without-guns in the lonely fells, may success attend the swift action of the good and vigilant shepherd.