



THE

Hawke's Bay Government Gazette.

(PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY).

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DONALD McLEAN, Superintendent.

VOL. X.

FRIDAY, MARCH 12, 1869.

No. 5.

REPORT OF INSPECTOR OF SHEEP.

SIR,—I have the honor to inform you that I have completed my inspection of the flocks in this province, and have much pleasure in reporting their continued freedom from scab or other infectious or contagious disease.

The Sheep and Scab Act and amendments thereto continue to work well; but I think it might prove desirable to have their provisions embodied in one comprehensive Act. Sheepowners might wish to have a tar or paint branding clause inserted in the Act, or more stringent measures passed for the immediate suppression of scab, if we should ever be so unfortunate as to have this disease within the boundaries of this province.

Fears were entertained by some of the settlers in the southern district as to the probability of scab spreading into this province from the Whareama district, where it is alarmingly on the increase—owing mainly, I am informed, to a new block of land having been opened up in that locality, and stocked with sheep, many of which strayed back to the runs they were purchased or driven from, and in doing so had passed through scabby flocks or infected country, and by this means have carried the disease into flocks which were previously clean.

I proceeded to the Whareama, and had an interview with Mr. Telford, the Sub-Inspector of Sheep for that district, who assured me that all the flocks on the coast line between Castle Point and the southern

boundary of this province, were as yet clean; and I am indebted to that gentleman for a subsequent communication, affirming that such is still the case, but that he does not consider the Mataikona flocks very safe. Some of the neighbouring flocks being scabby, this is so far satisfactory, inasmuch as there is no immediate danger to be apprehended; but, in the event of it getting to the Mataikona flocks, its advance into this province would then probably not be uncertain, but simply a question of time, unless other means than at present exist are devised to obstruct its further progress up the coast. The most effectual scheme which presents itself to my mind, having this for its object, would be to secure a block of land on the coast line, by lease or otherwise, clear every sheep from it, and convert it into a cattle station. This could be carried out by a company comprised of runholders. The cattle run could be made self-paying, and no doubt leave a handsome dividend to the shareholders.

This scheme would materially guard against the possibility of scab being introduced through the straying of infected sheep. It may be said that I am premature in suggesting any scheme; but as it would not be in accordance with my convictions if I reported that there was no danger to be apprehended, I have thus crudely made the foregoing remarks.

Beyond our northern boundary this disease has not yet been stamped out; but I am informed that it now exists only in one of the flocks in Poverty Bay. No doubt the disturbed and unsafe state of Turanga

has retarded its complete eradication. Fears need not, I think, be entertained of this disease being brought across our northern frontier by sheep, as many natural impediments exist which almost preclude the possibility of sheep straying from Turanga into this province. Too much vigilance, however, cannot be exercised by settlers, to guard against the unconscious introduction of scab by shearers or new station hands from infected districts, whose clothes or wrappings round their shear-handles might convey the live acari or the dormant ova of such. The driving or disposal of sheep from a clean to an infected district within certain limits, is also to be deprecated, as some of the sheep will in all probability endeavour to stray back, and may carry infection in their track. This is especially the case with rams, which, if practicable, invariably try to get back to the run they have been bred or reared on. I have no doubt most, if not all, flockmasters are well aware of this; but these objectionable contingencies are apt to be lost sight of in the hurry of shearing or chance disposal of sheep.

There have been 350 sheep imported into the province during the last twelve months, as against 50 for the corresponding period of 1867-68; and I am advised of 250 more to arrive within the next week. These sheep are all merinos, imported for stud purposes, and comprise many valuable animals selected or descended from the stud flocks of Learmonth, Currie, and other eminent breeders in the Australian colonies. This is a step in the right direction, that will tend not a little to improve the breed of our sheep; and it is to be hoped that care will be taken to select ewes for them worthy of their services.

The exports for the last twelve months have been about 30,000, chiefly wethers, which have been absorbed by the Auckland market. By the returns of last May, there were 425,000 ewes, and 288,639 wethers and rams, making a total of 713,639 sheep in the Province at that date, which, with the addition of the last spring lambing, would swell the number to about 900,000 sheep in the province at the present time. This number is probably under the mark, as I daresay in filling in the returns the sheep are not over-estimated.

While it is gratifying to observe the improved condition of the sheep this summer, compared with last year, I cannot congratulate the sheep owners generally on any marked improvement in the quality of their flocks. The superior condition of the sheep this summer is entirely owing to the unusually favourable season we have had, and not to there being fewer sheep to feed, and it should not be overlooked that a continuation of such weather cannot always be relied upon.

A few of the stations have adopted the hot water and spouting system of sheep-washing this year, and in most cases considerable success has been achieved. I have seen some of the samples washed in this manner which would bear favorable comparison with the brightest wool from a scouring establishment, and I believe this system of sheep washing would have been more generally adopted this year but for the paucity of shearers, and the want of confidence felt in being able to complete

their shearing without interruption. This is a branch of sheep farming that is engaging much attention, and I believe the pecuniary results, to those who have attained to any great degree of success, will prove most satisfactory. Yet I imagine unless we shear much earlier in the season, before the dust rises and the grass and other seeds ripen, and devote more care and attention to the classing of the wool before it is put in the bales—not until this is done, do I believe will the benefits to be derived from this improved system of wool washing be either fully realized or appreciated. Let us hope to see this system pursued and extended year by year until river washing and greasy clips will be the exception, and not the rule as it now is.

I have endeavoured to ascertain what has been the annual average increase of lambs and rate of mortality in the flocks of the province during the last two years, and the result of my observations and inquiries would induce me to place the former at about 50 per cent., and the latter not less than 8 per cent. Many of the short musters—which, by the way, are on the increase every year—are put down as missing, and hopes expressed that they will turn up from some part of the run, or out of the adjoining flocks next muster; but very few of those missing sheep ever do turn up. The poor lambings and high rate of mortality are attributable to the same causes, overstocking and old age. As very few of the flocks have been subjected to periodical culling, or indeed ever have been culled at all, there are necessarily a large proportion of old and weakly sheep among them; many ewes reckoned as breeding are too old to breed or rear lambs, and die off each succeeding winter.

My impression is that we have already reached, if not gone beyond, the carrying capacity of the province as a whole, in its yet very partially improved state. That such is the case I venture to think few practical men who have travelled about the province during the last two years will deny. The very small number of fat sheep is, I think, sufficient proof that such is the case. If so, there is a stern necessity either to check or stop breeding, or to reduce the number of sheep. I brought this subject prominently forward in my last report, and had hoped to have seen the suggestions then offered more generally adopted. I do not know that I could urge more cogent reasons for reducing our worthless stock now, than I did last year, except that there will be so many more to get rid of. Hitherto we have bred for numbers—at least that has been the rule. This rule is not however of universal application; we have generally bred from every ewe that would breed—not very particular either as to what kind of rams we bred from; and in many cases have so overstocked as to depreciate wool, carcass, and constitution. This procedure must be entirely changed. We have not now an outlet for our surplus stock, and to make stations pay we must reduce the stock considerably, and breed for quality; and, with a due consideration to the carrying capacity of runs, all the profitless sheep from every station ought to be boiled down or otherwise disposed of, at whatever they will bring. If not, there will be poorer lambings this coming spring, and a higher rate of

mortality. The province may soon acquire a character for the unsoundness of its wool—a character which, if once established in the home market, may take years to efface, and in the meantime will operate most prejudicially against our interests. Many entertain the idea that they cannot afford to sacrifice 20 or 30 per cent of their flocks—that they will have so much less wool next shearing. This, I maintain, is a mistaken theory, as it must be borne in mind that the 30 per cent thus culled are all the unprofitable sheep in the flock, whose average clip, if kept until next shearing, would probably not average in price or weight one half of that from the really profitable sheep; and it is, I believe, owing in a great measure to the admixture of the wool from such sheep in a station's clip, that it brings such low prices in the market. Let us imagine the comparative yearly receipts from a station of, say 10,000 sheep, the average of the present uncultured flocks, and the same number that had been subjected to a rigorous system of judicious annual cullings for, say 4 or 5 years, with not a sheep in the flock over 5 or 6 years old—having a uniformity of character which could not have been arrived at without culling, netting for wool at least 3s 6d per annum, and having 2,000 prime fat sheep, wethers and cast ewes, every year, to dispose of or boil down. With warm water washing, &c., the clip would probably average more than I have quoted. This is what might be, and what it will have to be on most of the stations in the province. I leave it for the sheep-owners themselves to compare it with what is. To make sheep-farming profitable, it must be reduced to a rigid science. It is so in England and Scotland, it has become or is fast becoming so in the Australian colonies, and it will have to become so here. I have already stated that there are about 900,000 sheep in the province. According to my calculations, 200,000 of this number ought to be cleared off before the winter sets in, or at least before it is far advanced. It is true the Boiling-down Establishment could not boil down a tithe of this number in the time, even if kept constantly employed; but why could not nearly every station boil down its own culls. I think it would be more profitable and convenient to most of the stations to do so. A ship's water-tank, with a little alteration, would serve as a melting pot, which could be built in alongside the woolshed with brick, stone, or clay; the shed would serve for all the necessary requirements of slaughtering, hanging, cutting up, and for stowing away tallow casks, and so forth. Very little additional help would be required beyond the usual station hands; the only additional expense to be incurred would, I think, be cost of boilers, tri-pots, or indeed whatever could be procured in this way—house water-tanks, if nothing better offered,—a supply of tallow casks, and may be an extra hand or two for a few months. Even on small stations, if a pot large enough for the purpose could be procured, this thinning process could be going on, even without the convenience of paddocks or other facilities inseparable from larger stations, as small mobs of sheep could be brought in as required from the run, passed through the

drafting yards, mouthed, and all objectionable sheep carefully culled out, especially those of a certain age, say everything over six years old, fat and lean—spare none above that age; their skins would be worth about a shilling, taking the winter all through, and the pigs that could be kept on the offal would be a source of profit. On stations where there were no paddocks or separate runs, it would be both necessary and desirable to put a distinctive paint or other mark on the two classes, to prevent in any future draftings that might take place while the boiling-down was going on the unnecessary handling or mousing of sheep which had previously passed through the yards for this purpose: this, of course, is simply a matter of detail which must be regulated and determined by the facilities of the various stations. Advantage ought, I think, to be taken of this favorable season, as many of the sheep are now in fair condition, and are likely to keep so for the next two months. Even if only from twenty to fifty sheep a day could be boiled down on the most of the stations, the thinning process would be gradually but surely going on, leaving day by day more grass for the good sheep that are meant to be kept. The proceeds from those culls would not be so insignificant as one might at first imagine; the account would probably stand thus—

Dr.	d.	Cr.	s.	d.
To cost of casks per		By 7lbs tallow per		
sheep	2	sheep, at 4d...	2	4
Carriage tallow ...	2	Skin per sheep	1	0
Labor	4	Profit on pigs...	0	1
Firewood and sundries... ..	3			
	11		3	5

Nett result 2s. 6d. I do not think that I have over-estimated the yield of tallow—but I should suppose that I am probably under the mark; the other items I should think tolerably correct. The boiler or pot would always be of service scouring the locks from the station, &c. The pigs, as the boiling-down season was drawing to a close, could be made into bacon, which is always saleable either here or in the other provinces. The facts I have here adduced prove that boiling-down must be resorted to, and the sooner it is commenced the better. Store sheep are a drug in this and the Auckland market, and if meat-preserving should ever be introduced or successfully established in this province, as I have no doubt but that it will be in all the colonies, it will only be fat sheep that will be eligible for this purpose.

In conclusion, I trust that some of the suggestions I have here offered will be thought worthy of adoption, and will tend to improve the flocks and make them more remunerative to their owners.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
Your most obdt. servant,
G. PEACOCK,
Inspector of Sheep, &c.

His Honor the Superintendent,
Napier.

Inspector of Sheep Office,
Napier, Feb. 26, 1869.

RETURN showing the Lands Sold, Applications for Unagricultural Land to go to Auction at 5s. an Acre, and Rents and Assessments received, at the Crown Lands Office, at Napier, during the month of October, 1868.

Date	Mode of Sale.	Name	Particulars	AREA OF LAND SOLD.			CASH			Rate per Acre	Area of Unagricultural Land to go to auction at 5s. an acre.	Amount of Deposit at 10 per cent.	Rents and Assessments.	REMARKS.
				Town	Suburban	Country	Town	Suburban	Country					
1868 Oct.				A. R. P.	A. R. P.	A. R. P.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.		A. R. P.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	
2	1831	J. Boyle ...	Agricultural Sections Nos. 19 and 22, Pukahu ...	...	...	40 3 30	...	...	142 0 0	£3 10s	...	...	...
3	1832	T. P. Russell ...	North Porangahau Block ...	...	...	210 0 0	...	...	105 0 0	10s	...	...	...
7	...	L. Pearce ...	Rent 6 months, Lot 7, Maungaharuru Block ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	43 10 0	Deposit at Auction
13	1833	J. Reynolds ...	Agricultural Section No. 21, Pukahu ...	...	...	21 0 20	...	...	63 0 0	£3	...	...	...
14	1834	T. Condie and H. J. Twigg ...	Agricultural Sections Nos. 43 and 52, Pukahu ...	...	...	125 1 0	...	...	376 0 0	£3	...	...	...
26	...	J. Johnston ...	Lots Nos. 1147, 1148, & 1149, Ruataniwha ...	...	...	847 0 0	...	...	191 7 4	4s 6d	...	...	...	Bal. 9-10 Auc. Sale
26	...	J. Hallett ...	Lots 1144, 1145, Pukititiri ...	...	...	300 0 0	...	...	67 10 0	4s 6d	...	...	...	" "
30	1835	T. P. Russell ...	Lot No. 1150, Ruataniwha ...	...	...	320 0 0	...	...	72 0 0	4s 6d	...	...	...	Deposit forfeited
			Totals ...	...	...	1864 1 10	...	...	1016 17 4	...	...	...	43 10 0	

RECAPITULATION.

	AVAILABLE.	UNAVAILABLE.
Land Sales—cash ...	£1016 17 4	...
Rents and Assessments ...	43 10 0	...
Deposits on 5s. land ...	...	...
	1060 7 4	...
Deduct salary of Receiver of Land Revenue ...	6 5 0	...
Nett Balance ...	£1054 2 4	...

Crown Lands Office,
Napier, February 24, 1869.

J. C. LAMBTON CARTER,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.