1892. NEW ZEALAND.

(ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE INSPECTORS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1892.)

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

The CHIEF INSPECTOR OF STOCK to the Hon. the MINISTER OF LANDS. Head Office, Live Stock Department, Wellington, 6th July, 1892.

I have the honour to submit the following report for the year ending 31st March, 1892:-

SHEEP.

The annual returns for the years ending 31st May, 1890, and 30th April, 1891, were presented to the House last session, the former showing the number of sheep in the colony for the period, 1st June, 1889, to 31st May, 1890, as 16,116,113, or an increase of 692,785; and the latter for the period, 1st June, 1890, to 30th April, 1891, as 16,753,752, or an increase of 637,639. The increase or decrease in the different districts for the year ending 30th April, 1891, is as follows:-

						increase.	Decrease.
Aucklar	nd					 118,577	•••
Napier	• • •					 80,421	•••
Welling	ton-Wes	t Coast				 372,583	•••
Marlborough-Nelson				•••		 24,036	•••
Canterbury-Kaikoura				• • •		 	15,410
Otago						 57,432	
O							
		Tota	al	•••	•••	 653,049	
	Less decrease					 15,410	
			•••			 	
	Total increase			•••		 637,639	

This increase would have been larger but for the continued drought experienced from 1888 to 1891 in Canterbury and northern and central Otago. The abundance of rain, however, which has fallen during the past season, will, I have no doubt, again bring these districts up to their former carrying capacity, and I anticipate a further steady increase this year.

The classification is put down in the returns as-

Merinoes Other breeds	•••	•••.	 Male. 2,584,154 3,737,906	3,349		= 5,933,538 =10,820,214
Total		•••	 	•••	•••	16,753,752

The number of sheep returned by owners at last census, 5th April, 1891, and the number returned at 30th April of the same year to this department showed a marked difference, being, say, 1,400,000 more by census-returns than those collected by the Inspectors; this no doubt arises partly through carelessness and the frequent changing of sheep at that particular season, also the deducting of a certain percentage for deaths equal to estimated number for the year.

During the past year I have travelled over a considerable portion of both islands, and I am pleased to say that, except in two or three particular districts, the general health of the flocks has been excellent. The winter was extremely favourable for sheep, being cold and dry, and with an early moist spring, which brought the grass away in great abundance, the sheep came in at shearing in splendid condition. Although the moist weather suited the country, it proved a great hindrance to shearing operations, which in some districts, especially in the South, were protracted much beyond the usual time. The wool was also found to be lighter than usual, but, if anything, cleaner, and this, no doubt, will help to bring up the average return by an enhanced price. Unfortunately, the wool-market is in a very depressed state, but there are now some signs of improvement. It is also satisfactory to note that there is a growing feeling in America against the high import-duty on wool, and everything points to an alteration in the direction of either abolishing or reducing this impost. If this were done it would give a great impetus to wool-producing countries.

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Sir,---