

Report No. 5.

"Tauranga Disease."

SIR,—

Live Stock Department, Wellington, — February, 1892.

In accordance with your instructions, I again visited the Tauranga District during the months of December and January last, for the purpose of making further inquiry into the cause of the mortality prevailing there among young sheep stock. I visited Tauranga at this time of the year because it is from November to February that the mortality among the lambs is reported to be greatest. From what I was enabled to observe, lambs appear to thrive fairly well until the ewes begin to fail in their milk-supply; then, unless the lambs be removed to another district, or be liberally supplied with artificial food, they pine away and die. The only *post mortem* appearances in lambs so dying—provided they be of a flock that has by careful dosing been kept free from parasites—are those of "Inanition."

Now, I would submit that if lambs kept free from parasites, but not artificially fed, die, and that artificially fed lambs do not die, surely this is evidence enough that the natural herbage of this country is insufficient for rearing healthy sheep. As to why this is so, I can hardly say—it may in some measure be due to the geological formation of this country, or perhaps to the want or excess of some mineral matter in the animal economy. However, it must be borne in mind that this is not a solitary instance of country on which it is found impossible to rear sheep; there are all over the world similar tracts of land on which sheep-breeding can only be carried on with the aid of artificial food-stuffs.

I am informed that grown sheep fatten readily on this country. Would it not pay, then, to fatten off sheep from the Waikato which are at present being fattened there at the cost of country that would be more profitably employed in breeding stock; or, if the Tauranga settler prefers to keep breeding ewes, why not sell off ewes and lambs every year, soon after shearing, and buy again for the following season a fresh lot of ewes?

The establishment of a small experimental farm in this district would no doubt be of benefit in determining the possibility of making sheep-farming in any form pay; but it appears to me such a farm, to be of any real service, would necessarily have to be conducted on a theoretical as well as a practical basis.

I have, &c.,

JOHN F. McCLEAN, M.R.C.V.S.,

Government Veterinarian.

The Hon. the Minister of Lands.

No. 6.

Mortality among Sheep in Feilding District.

SIR,—

Live Stock Department, Wellington, 30th November, 1891.

I have the honour to report for you information that I visited the Feilding District to inquire into the mortality prevailing there among a large number of flocks. I also visited a few flocks in the Wairarapa, where losses from the same cause had also occurred. This mortality seems to be wholly confined to the ewe flocks, and in some instances has reached a very high percentage. In many flocks the deaths are reported to have commenced about a month before lambing, and in others not until three weeks or a month subsequent to lambing. In all the flocks I examined where deaths had taken place I found all the sheep looking generally out of sorts. Some, it was reported, would die suddenly, and others linger for a day or two; but all cases were characterized by the rapid manner in which decomposition set in after death. I made many careful *post mortem* examinations, and am of opinion the cause of death in all instances was a degeneration of the liver, simulating to my mind, in far the larger number of cases, the disease described in the human being as "Acute yellow atrophy," and in the remaining cases a degeneration of a fatty character seemed to be the cause of death. . . . This would appear to be caused most probably from errors in dieting, such, for instance, as the presence of too proportionately large a quantity of saccharine materials in the herbage, and absence of nitrogenous constituents, due, perhaps, to the influence of the past season, together with ewes during the latter period of gestation not taking a sufficient amount of exercise, unless compelled to seek their feed, which previous to this mortality had been over-abundant. In several instances the attention of owners has been drawn to the sheep eating clay. This would seem to indicate that previously they had suffered from attacks of congestion of the liver, due to the same causes—viz., stimulating food and want of sufficient exercise.

From the above you will understand I do not consider the disease in any sense infectious or contagious; and, as this mortality has, in several newspapers, been described as "Anthrax, or Cumberland," doubtless from the apparent similarity of the *ante* and *post mortem* appearances as described by settlers to the text-book descriptions of "Anthrax," I would inform you that I made a careful microscopical search for *Bacilli anthracis*, as well as a series of inoculations, but obtained only negative results. The only deduction to be drawn from the results of this investigation is that it would seem desirable in plentiful seasons such as the past, to keep lambing ewes on pastures of not too luxuriant a nature, so as to insure their having to take that amount of exercise so essential to their general good health.

I have, &c.,

JOHN F. McCLEAN, M.R.C.V.S.,

Government Veterinarian.

The Hon. the Minister of Lands.

No. 7.

SIR,—

Live Stock Department, Wellington, — March, 1892.

I have the honour to inform you that during the past year I have visited certain parts of the West Coast district, where the department had been informed many wether sheep were suffering from some urinary trouble. I examined a number of flocks and found several sheep suffering from what appeared to be inability to micturate owing to the orifice of the prepuce having gradually