

87. How long would you have them on the farm before you would dispose of them?—With regard to these cattle, I do not intend to dispose of them until they are four years old.

88. What is your usual system? You have just informed the Committee that most of your stock is purchased, and, I assume, fattened on the land. How long would you keep such stock on this land?—A great deal of the land is not broken in, and I have no stock on that land. The first piece of land I got was fattening land. Since then I have been breaking in low bush country. There is young grass suitable for young stock, and there is native grass as well. It would be an ideal place for rearing young stock if it was not for the water; so I bought young stock, assuming that the mills would be stopped.

89. How long would you keep stock on the land adjoining the Oroua River, where they would have to water at the river?—They are not compelled to water at the river. In wet weather there is plenty of water in the drains. It is only in the dry season that they have to water at the river.

90. How long do you usually keep stock adjoining the Oroua River in the summer-time?—I have never taken it on myself to fence the stock in against the river; but if there is any stock close to the river and there is the slightest thing wrong with them, they go under at once.

91. During the months when the water is at its lowest, how do you notice that there is something going wrong with the stock? Do they stand about alone, and appear out of condition?—They start to scour, and they are gone almost at once.

92. They die almost at once?—Yes. I can give you one case. I had a team working on a part of the farm where there was good water. They were running at the homestead before, and did not touch the river; but quite unknown to me one of the mares was left on some land away from the river where some work was being done. This mare was brought in after being away three weeks. She then drank at the river, and was very bad. I had to get a veterinary surgeon, and it cost me a fiver. He stated it was blood-poisoning, and we gave the mare medical treatment for a day or two. We thought she was getting better, but she went lame in her hind-quarters, and eventually fell into the river. I lost her.

93. Do you make a habit, Mr. Pearce, of drafting out stock you find to be suffering from this cause, and which are out of condition, and taking them elsewhere?—Yes, I take them over to my Te Wheka place, above the mills.

94. What is the effect?—It is beneficial if they are not gone too far.

95. *Mr. Buick.*] At what time of the year do you have the greatest number of deaths among your young stock?—Well, so far as the purebred cattle are concerned, it is going on continuously. There is no difference whether they are twelve months old or have never been taken from their mothers.

96. *Mr. Sykes.*] I understand you claim that there is great erosion in the banks of the river because of the accumulation of debris, flax-leaves, &c., on the other side of the river?—Yes, that was one of the causes of the action, and affected two of the settlers particularly. They have to bank the water back. One settler could not keep the water back, although his land has been banked for years. I think it has cost him as much as £250 to keep 1 chain up.

97. This gentleman had a difficulty with the erosion of his land before the flax-mills started, did he not?—Oh, no.

98. Since the flax-mills started he has had to make these special banks?—Yes.

99. Has the value of the land been affected by this erosion?—Well, to the outside public it may not appear to be of much importance, but it is a serious matter to the farmer or owner.

100. Are floods more frequent?—I do not think they are more frequent now than they were six or seven years ago.

101. They are not more frequent now than they were before the mills started?—We had a very severe one last summer.

102. Were you in occupation of your present farm before the flax-mills started operations?—I had a leasehold further down the river.

103. I just wish to ask you whether your stock throve at that particular time? Were you in occupation of the land before the flax-mills started?—Well, the bulk of the land was then in its native state, and I was not paying anything for a great deal of it. I was running cattle on Native land, and on the Hon. Mr. Johnston's land.

104. The land is thoroughly drained now?—In the summer-time. Of course, it floods at times.

105. I presume the stock could drink this drain-water equally as well as they could the river-water?—The land is intersected by swampy creeks, and there is a great deal of low land. Some of it would not be dry enough to get at once a week.

106. *Mr. Bollard.*] Since the flax-mills have been working on the river what is the average number of stock on your farm?—At times the number is about one hundred and fifty horses, five thousand or six thousand sheep, and seven hundred or eight hundred head of cattle. From time to time I am always drafting off and on to the place.

107. Can you give us any idea of the average number of cows?—I cannot tell you. As soon as the flood was over in the river last summer there was 800 acres quite out of grass, and the place could not hold the stock.

108. Can you tell us how many head of stock you have lost through drinking the water?—That is the reason I can get no compensation: I cannot prove that the stock have been drinking the water. The cattle die, but, of course, I do not see them drinking the water. Strange cattle drink the water, but cattle that have been on the place some time do not drink the water if they can help it.

109. Can you tell us how many you have lost through the water?—During the last three months I have skinned fifty or over in one draft. Other settlers have lost stock. Mr. Morcamb