

SESSION II.  
1923.  
NEW ZEALAND.

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# BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

(REPORT OF THE) FOR THE YEAR 1922-23.

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*Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.*

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## REPORT.

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The Hon. Minister of Agriculture.

SIR,—

28th June, 1923.

I have pleasure in submitting the following report of the work of the Board of Agriculture for the year ended 30th April last, concurrent with which the term of appointment of the members of the Board expired in terms of the Board of Agriculture Act, 1913. In the circumstances, the time appears to me to be opportune for placing on record my very great appreciation of the attention members have given to the work of the Board, of the broad-minded and impartial manner in which they have approached the varied and important questions submitted for their consideration, and of the assistance invariably extended to me at all sittings.

I should also like to take this opportunity of placing on record the Board's thanks to Dr. Reakes, Director-General of Agriculture, and other officers of the Department for the information and advice they have given to the Board from time to time when matters of a technical character have been under review.

During the past year His Excellency the Governor-General was pleased to appoint Mr. G. L. Marshall, a prominent member of the New Zealand Farmers' Union, as a member of the Board, and it is confidently anticipated that his wide knowledge and experience of agricultural conditions and problems of the Dominion will prove most helpful to the Board in its deliberations.

By reason of his retirement from the Public Service, Mr. H. W. Rowden automatically relinquished the post of Secretary, the duties connected with which he had filled in an able manner for several years.

### MEAT-EXPORT CONTROL ACT, 1921-22.

This Act, the proposals for the establishment of which were considered by representatives of the Board in association with other interested parties, has now been in operation sufficiently long to enable a reliable judgment to be formed of its value to the meat-producers of the Dominion, and it is very gratifying to be able to record that the achievements of the Board have amply justified the Government in placing the measure on the statute-book. The Board has proceeded with the task imposed upon it in a thorough and unostentatious manner, and the negligible amount of criticism which its policy has evoked may be accepted as evidence of the fact that the utmost confidence is reposed in it by producers. Its achievements are too well known to necessitate their recapitulation in this report.

### FACILITIES FOR IMPORTATION OF PUREBRED STOCK.

A deputation representing the various breeders' societies waited upon the Board and solicited its assistance in connection with representations which it proposed to make to the Government with a view to securing the subsidization of importers of purebred stock. Recognizing that the Dominion is a first-class pedigree-stock country, and is peculiarly adapted for the breeding of stud stock by reason of its equable climate and almost entire immunity from stock-diseases of a serious character, the Board viewed with sympathy the desire of the breeders' societies to secure some amelioration of the conditions which were retarding the importation of fresh blood, one of the principal of which was the high freight rates in operation. The views of the Board on the question were subsequently placed before you, but before action could be taken telegraphic advice was received from London that the

shipping companies had, of their own volition, decided to carry pedigree stock freight-free. This very generous concession on the part of the shipping companies was greatly appreciated by the breeders' associations and the Board, and will, it is hoped, result in the introduction of high-class breeding-stock which will speedily enable New Zealand to take a foremost place in the world as a stock-breeding country. Unfortunately, there is considerable difficulty in importing stock other than the expense, on account of the prevalence of foot-and-mouth disease in the United Kingdom, which makes it necessary to take every precaution before allowing stock to leave England. The danger of importing worm-nests, also the disease which is carried by the tick, has rendered it necessary to prohibit cattle from being imported from Australia. Although the tick is in New Zealand we have no tick-fever, and at all hazards this must be kept from our shores.

#### FREIGHT RATES ON PUREBRED STOCK EXPORTED FROM NEW ZEALAND.

The development of pedigree-stock breeding in the Dominion depends not only upon the ability of breeders to secure from abroad stock of a high quality for the purpose of strengthening their flocks and herds, but also upon their ability to establish and maintain a substantial export trade. It was represented to the Board that the freight charges upon stock exported were proving an encumbrance to the development of the export business, consequently the Board, after going carefully into the matter, requested the Department to make suitable representations on the subject to the shipping companies with a view to securing a reduction in the freight charges then in force, and the deletion, if possible, of the condition requiring a minimum freight of £200, especially in so far as it applied to stock consigned to South America. To these representations the Chairman of the New Zealand Overseas Shipowners' Committee replied as under:—

"I have to acknowledge your letter regarding the reduced freight rates on live-stock to Monte Video. The question has been discussed by the Liners' Committee, but we regret we cannot see our way to further reduce the rates of freight, and the condition in regard to the minimum freight of £200 was fixed to warrant the payment of port charges which accrue if a ship lands cargo. On occasions when other cargo is offering to Monte Video to the extent to permit deletion of the minimum-freight condition we will promptly advise you so that you can communicate same to the stock-breeders, but so far this season there has been practically no cargo offering to Monte Video. We would aim to give you time to negotiate sale, but of course this depends on the length of time when the fixture for other cargo has been made."

It is pleasing to be able to record that the shipping companies have carried out their promise, and that during the past twelve months 418 stud sheep have been exported, to South America. Provided that a suitable steamer service can be maintained there appears to be no reason why the South American market should not prove a lucrative one to New Zealand breeders.

It is to be hoped that next year's Exhibition in London will give an opportunity to the different breed associations to make arrangements to exhibit some of our animals, especially sheep, as the standard reached in New Zealand is a very high one, and would be a good advertisement for New Zealand.

#### PRINCIPLES OF LIVE-STOCK BREEDING.

During the year the Board has been giving a good deal of attention to this most important subject, as a result of a communication received from the Franklin Agricultural and Pastoral Association. Several members of the Board, and the Department of Agriculture at the request of the Board, have collected a great amount of useful information. The papers prepared by the members of the Board, and also a most valuable one read at a meeting of the Board by Mr. W. D. Hunt, giving the results of his experience, have already been forwarded to the Franklin Association, and are now being printed for circulation to the members of the Council of Agriculture. At a later date, when additional reports on the subject which the Board is securing from abroad come to hand, it is the intention to prepare and publish a digest of all the papers for circulation to breeders in the Dominion. This will enable those interested in breeding in the Dominion to compare their practice with what obtains elsewhere and ensure that sound principles are followed. This subject is more particularly interesting to stud-stock breeders, but nevertheless all farmers who are raising stock should have some knowledge of the principles of breeding, and the publication of this data should be of considerable benefit to them.

#### THE CULL COW AND SCRUB BULL.

This matter has also come under review, and it is to be regretted that there are so many farmers who do not realize the great importance of using only the very best sire available, and, when securing cows for their herds, of taking steps to safeguard themselves against the purchase of inferior animals that have been discarded by others. In these directions they show a lamentable want of regard for their own interests. It has been demonstrated beyond all question that the only satisfactory manner of determining a cow's milking-qualities is by test. If buyers would exercise greater care when purchasing animals and secure information as to their milking-qualities the cull-cow problem would be less acute. After reviewing the matter most exhaustively, the Board arrived at the conclusion that the time is not yet opportune to make compulsory the licensing of bulls, or the branding or speying of unprofitable cows, but recommended that active propaganda, in which agricultural and pastoral associations, herd-testing and breeding societies, and dairy companies should be asked to assist, be undertaken against the use of inferior animals as sires, and the sale of cows as milkers when they have been proved to be unprofitable.

I may add that the Board is giving further consideration to this important subject.

#### ECONOMIC TREATMENT OF SANDY GRAZING AND AGRICULTURAL LANDS.

As the outcome of correspondence received from Mr. K. W. Dalrymple, of Bull's, the Board discussed with the Director-General the question of the economic treatment of sandy grazing and

agricultural lands, particularly those of the west coast of the North Island, with the result that the matter is now receiving the close attention of the Department of Agriculture and the State Forest Service, and it is trusted that their combined efforts will result in a practical and efficient *modus operandi* being evolved.

As it was reported that a good deal of the trouble was due to the injudicious manner in which some settlers were farming their lands, the Director-General, at the request of the Board, has arranged for an officer to visit the district and investigate and advise on this particular aspect of the question.

#### EXPERIMENTAL FARMS.

Although the Government did not see its way clear to give effect to the Board's recommendations in connection with the Tauranga Horticultural Station and the Moa Seed-farm, it is satisfactory to know that it has been found possible to make suitable arrangements with the lessee of the citrus portion of the Tauranga Farm for the continuation of the experimental work inaugurated by the Department in connection with citrus-growing. It was also with satisfaction that the Board learned that arrangements had been made for the continuation of the work of seed-raising which had been started at the Moa Seed-farm. The district in which this farm is situated is regarded by the Board as being eminently suited for the production of pure seeds of the best quality, an ample supply and the use of which are of paramount importance to the Dominion. Good farming is impossible without good seeds. The members of the Moa Seed-farm Association are to be commended for their public-spirited action in continuing the important work which this farm has been doing, and the Board sincerely hopes that success will attend their efforts.

#### AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION.

The question of rural education was again considered by the Board at several meetings. Members view with alarm the increased tendency in secondary education to give more prominence to the professional and commercial side to the neglect of the training of country boys in agriculture. The early establishment of a farm school at the Ruakura Farm of Instruction is therefore viewed with much satisfaction, and it is sincerely trusted that it will not be long before schools of a similar character are established in other parts of the Dominion. The urgent necessity which exists for the establishment of such schools is beyond question.

Agricultural education is, of course, recognized to some extent in our high schools, but it is questionable whether the best use is made of the students when they leave. Many boys are anxious to proceed to the University to further their studies in the sciences relating to agriculture, but are precluded from sitting for the Matriculation Examination as they have not studied a foreign language. The usual high-school course comprises agricultural work, agricultural botany, agricultural chemistry, agricultural zoology, agricultural physics, woodwork, and perhaps ironwork, short course in electricity, dairy science, surveying, mathematics, English, history, geography, and book-keeping. These subjects are of greater importance to the farmer than French, Latin, or German, yet no matter how proficient the student may be in agricultural subjects he cannot matriculate and pursue his studies further at the University owing to his having to take a language. The University Senate was approached and asked if it could see its way to allow a student who wished to go on to higher education in the agricultural sciences to take up other subjects than languages for the purpose of qualifying for the Matriculation Examination, but I regret having to state that a reply in the negative was received.

Considering the large amount spent on education in the Dominion, the Board hopes that you will be able to induce the Cabinet to further increase the amount devoted to agricultural education. Especially is this desirable when there is every prospect, through the generosity of Sir Walter Buchanan, that a Chair of Agriculture will be established at Victoria College; but some provision must be made for available land where the students can take their practical work and, under the Professor of Agriculture, experiments may be made in conjunction with the course of agriculture. There is every hope that the sum which Sir John Logan Campbell bequeathed for the purpose of establishing a Chair of Agriculture in Auckland will soon be available. There is no direction in which development is so much needed in New Zealand as further rural education and economics.

#### DISPOSAL OF NEW ZEALAND PRODUCE IN UNITED KINGDOM.

The Board availed itself of the opportunity afforded by the presence in New Zealand of Mr. A. Crabb, M.R.C.V.S., Trade and Produce Officer on the staff of the High Commissioner, to discuss with him marketing possibilities and methods of handling and disposing of our produce in the United Kingdom, and secured a great deal of information which will be extremely useful whenever these questions are under consideration in future. This matter is being well attended to now by the Meat Control Board.

#### SUBSIDY FOR LINCOLN AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE TOWARDS SEED-SELECTION WORK.

During the year the Board received a communication from the Director of the Lincoln College advising it that the Government proposed to discontinue the subsidy granted in the past towards the cost of seed-selection work carried out by the institution. As the continuance and extension of work of this nature is regarded by the Board as of paramount importance to the farming community, it considered that the withdrawal of the subsidy would be false economy. The Board requested that I should make personal representations to you on the subject, and was gratified to subsequently learn that the subsidy was to be continued, thus enabling this most useful work to be proceeded with. The need for pure selected seed is now recognized in Canterbury by the wheat-growers, and the demand for College seed greatly increased. The Board considers that, to enable the College to extend this work, the subsidy might well be increased.

## RABBIT NUISANCE ACT.

As a result of a communication addressed to the Board by Mr. A. C. Morton, of Ohingaiti, consideration has been given to the necessity of amending the machinery clauses of the Rabbit Nuisance Act relating to the formation of Rabbit Boards. At the present time Part III of the Act does not permit of the formation of Boards on any system of rating other than "rateable value," but as soon as it is constituted the Board must, upon a requisition in that behalf signed by not less than one-tenth of the ratepayers, take a poll as to changing over to an "acreage" rating basis.

With the passing of years and the cutting-up of large estates conditions have changed very materially in many districts since the Act was first drawn, and it has recently been found, in actual practice, that the absence of the right to establish Boards in the first instance upon an "acreage" rating basis has tended to retard the formation of new Boards, especially in districts which embrace hilly land worth a few pounds per acre, and flat, or comparatively flat, land of much greater value. The holders of the latter class of land, who would willingly sign a petition for the formation of a Board on an "acreage" rating basis, hesitate to sign a petition for the formation of a Board on a "rateable value" basis, because they cannot be sure that a poll to make the desired change will be successful. After reviewing the matter most carefully the Board is of opinion that it would be in the best interests of the Dominion to amend the Act giving the ratepayers the right to nominate in their petition the system of rating which they wish to adopt.

Another amendment which is also recommended, and which we feel sure will commend itself to you, is that the second election, and subsequent ones, of members of the Boards of Trustees should be held on the same day as the county elections.

A further suggestion which was made to the Board was that power should be given to levy differential rates; but after going into the matter most carefully the Board decided that it could not support such a proposal.

## NAURU AND OCEAN ISLAND PHOSPHATE.

From a statement placed before it by the Director-General of Agriculture the Board was pleased to learn that there had been a progressive increase in importations, and that last year the Dominion imported practically the whole of its quota of 16 per cent. The Board is of opinion that the Department should, at the earliest possible moment, publish a comprehensive report as to the results obtained by the Department and farmers generally from the use of this phosphate, it being considered that the dissemination of information of this character would prove of great value in awakening a realization of the benefits which accrue to producers from its use, thus stimulating the demand, a thing much to be desired in view of the fact that the greater the output at the islands the lower the cost of production and ultimate cost to the farmer. It is understood that the Department has this matter in hand, and will make a pronouncement on the subject as soon as its experiments have progressed sufficiently far to enable a definite statement to be made.

All the resolutions passed by the Council of Agriculture have been dealt with and answers forwarded to the Secretary of the Council. Among other matters which engaged the attention of the Board were the following:—

- Brands and carmarks;
- Publication of rainfall statistics in *Journal of Agriculture*;
- Carrying out a practical test for frozen meat, especially beef;
- Control of noxious weeds;
- Control of cattle-tick;
- Establishment of an island quarantine station for imported plants;
- Importation and distribution of game-birds;
- Disposal of offal from seed-cleaning machines; and the
- Question of remission of fees for inspection of agrimotors and oil-engines owned by farmers.

The Board desires me to thank you for the encouragement it has always received at your hands.

Yours, &c.,

J. G. WILSON,

President.

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