

Freezing Operations.—The average prices for New Zealand frozen meat obtained during 1923 were—Mutton, 8½d.; lamb, 11½d.; beef (fores), 3½d.; beef (hinds), 4½d. The exports of New Zealand mutton and lamb were much less than in 1922. On the other hand, beef was some 71,000 quarters in excess. The development in the chilled-beef trade again has had its effect on the demand for the New Zealand article.

The quantity of stock killed for the period 1st April, 1923, to 31st March, 1924, was as under :—

					Southdown.	Moerewa.
Cattle	..	..	..	..	6,536	6,486
Sheep	..	..	..	..	6,026	9,985
Lambs	..	..	..	..	60,892	47,634
Calves	..	..	..	..	3,202	453
Pigs	..	..	..	..	147	82

Land Board Work.—During the year the Land Board held thirteen ordinary meetings, occupying in all thirty-five days. The total number of items on the order papers amounted to 2,188, of which 1,146 were in connection with Crown lands business, and the balance, 1,042, related to soldier-settlement. An election for the elective member of the Board was held in June, 1923, the successful candidate being Mr. F. J. Dargaville, of Dargaville. Mr. V. Trounson, who was the settlers' representative since the inauguration of the district, did not seek re-election.

Freeholds.—During the year the number of ordinary Crown holdings made freehold was ninety, the total area being 9,139 acres. Under the heading of land for settlement seven holdings, totalling 25 acres, were freeholded, and one national-endowment holding of 3,900 acres.

Revenue and Arrears.—The total revenue for the year was slightly in excess of last year, being £51,279, whilst arrears showed an increase to 461 settlers, of a total amount of £24,418. Seventy-five per cent. of the arrears are, however, on account of rents due from discharged soldiers on settlement lands.

Land open for Selection.—The total area opened during the year was 14,976 acres, consisting for the most part of isolated sections. A number of sections previously opened for selection by discharged soldiers were withdrawn and offered for general selection.

The Birdwood Block, near Swanson, which was formerly a kauri-gum reserve, and has been ploughed and grassed by the Department, was offered for selection. The block contained 267 acres, all being selected except two sections.

Part of Waari Settlement, near Henderson, containing 106 acres, and subdivided into twenty-one sections, was withdrawn from soldier selection and offered for general application. These sections are eminently suitable for fruitgrowing and market-gardening, &c., fourteen of them being selected.

The Koheroa Block, containing 2,204 acres, situated near Pokeno, was also withdrawn and offered for general selection. Response, however, for these sections is still poor, only two of the eight sections offered going off. The reason is not apparent.

During the year effort was made to help to relieve the housing shortage, building sections adjacent to the city being offered for sale at auction, the response being very good. Eighteen sections in the Prescott Settlement, at Penrose, containing one-fifth of an acre each, were offered, twelve being sold. Part of Eccleston Settlement, at Otahuhu, containing twenty-one quarter-acre sections, were sold at auction, bidding being brisk. Nine sections at New Lynn and two at Onehunga were also easily disposed of.

In this connection, twenty-four education-reserve sections at Remuera were offered for lease for building purposes, all of them being taken up. Rural education reserves comprising twenty sections were also offered, only five being disposed of. For some reason these leases of rural land do not seem to be popular.

Ninety-one seaside sections at Orewa Beach, near Silverdale, were offered for sale at auction, and fifty-two were sold.

Lands for Future Disposal.—The principal areas for future selection comprise the following: Omaunu Block, situated in Whangaroa County, comprising 2,200 acres, which will be opened when necessary road deviation is completed. Tokawhero Block, of 2,033 acres, in Bay of Islands County, will be opened when roading completed. Kerikeri Block, of 7,000 acres, in Bay of Islands County, awaiting draining and roading. Omahuta Block, of 2,150 acres, is now being rescheduled for survey. Whangaiti Block, of 1,795 acres, situated in Whangarei County, to be opened when roading completed. Pakiri Block, of 1,500 acres, in Rodney County, to be opened when roading completed.

In addition there are several areas which could be opened provided cheap money and manure were available, viz.: Te Kuri, 18,000 acres; Riverhead, 9,000 acres; Paikauri, 8,900 acres; and Kapiro, 17,500 acres. Also the Cadman and Carrol Settlements, situated near Ellerslie, comprising in all some 154 building sections, will be opened provided the necessary street-formation is sufficiently advanced.

Our other Crown land consists of hill-tops of so poor and stony a nature that no one but a man possessing good neighbouring flats would care to tackle them, as they would only grow a very sparse lot of danthonia and brown-top and would not pay of themselves alone.

Other areas contain milling-bush, which is yearly growing in value, and, being the very best crop that will ever grow on these lands, the most should be made of it. The amount of bush-clad high elevations in this district is limited, and most of it should, I think, be kept for climatic purposes.

Settlement of Gum Lands.—A great deal of our vacant land in the north consists of gum lands, most of it easily approachable in the summer-time by well-graded earth roads, but so far as I can see the only way to successfully open and settle these lands is by making use of section 11 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1919. What is required is cheap money, cheaper manure, and better