

1926.  
NEW ZEALAND.

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# BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

(REPORT OF THE) FOR THE YEAR 1925-26.

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

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SIR,—

Board of Agriculture, Wellington, 20th August, 1926.

I have pleasure in submitting the following brief report of the work of the Board of Agriculture for the year ended 30th April last, and in so doing desire to place on record the Board's appreciation of the assistance it has at all times received from the Director-General of Agriculture and other responsible officers of the Department when matters of a technical nature have been under consideration.

Messrs. E. Averill (Hawke's Bay) and J. H. Perrett (Manawatu) decided, for private reasons, not to seek re-election for their respective districts. These gentlemen have served on the Board for some years, and their decision was received with regret by their colleagues on the Board, who greatly appreciate the services which they have rendered during their term of office.

## AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION.

The Board since its inception has taken active steps to further agricultural education and bring before the authorities the work of the farming community on this subject. The fact, therefore, that Government has decided to bring down a Bill to establish an agricultural college is most gratifying. In the report the Board presented to you on this subject it made many practical suggestions as to the system of education in primary and secondary schools in order to assist in the work of preparing those who would like to go further in an agricultural course, and also to see that the schoolmasters should have special knowledge to help this forward. The Board, therefore, hopes the Minister of Education will give effect to the recommendations contained in that report.

## ANNUAL SHEEP RETURNS.

For some years past the annual sheep returns have been taken as at 30th April, but an alteration of the date to the 30th June was recently urged by the New Zealand Sheepowners' Federation. The reasons submitted by the Federation in support of the proposed alteration were as follows:—

- (1.) That whereas the 30th April was satisfactory under old conditions, the cutting-up of estates and the development of the freezing industry had changed the position entirely, and at that date it was impossible to give an accurate return of sheep to be carried over the winter:
- (2.) That the present returns do not give an accurate record of the carrying-capacity of the farms:
- (3.) That the freezing-works did not close until the end of June:
- (4.) That in the back country of the South Island the rams are not put in with the ewes until well into May:
- (5.) That large numbers of sheep are bought or sold after the 30th April:
- (6.) That mustering was not always finished by the end of April.

The Department reported that the proposal to alter the date had been made on several occasions, three dates having been advanced—viz., 30th April, December or January, and 31st July—but that it had consistently advocated the retention of the present date, 30th April, on the following grounds:—

- (a.) In December or January shearing has not ceased in the South Island, and after this date there is a stragglers muster which accounts for a large number of woolly sheep.

- (b.) The Statistician collects as at 31st January the total number of sheep and lambs, and this forms a useful comparison.
- (c.) On 30th April the dipping has been finished, the autumn muster over, the bulk of the buying and selling has been done for the season, and the sheep turned out for the winter; an accurate return is therefore given; and, most important, a correct return of ewes put to the ram is available. Using these figures and estimating the lambing percentages, forecasts of the number of lambs have been made which have proved wonderfully accurate in the past.

After discussing the matter at some length with the secretary of the Sheepowners' Federation and the Director-General of Agriculture, the Board finally decided to recommend that the date for collection be altered from the 30th April to the 30th June.

#### FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE.

During the year the Board watched carefully the incidence of foot-and-mouth disease in Great Britain, the United States of America, and the Continent of Europe. Quite recently requests for the removal of the embargo against the importation of cattle from Scotland, and the importation of products of the soil from certain States in the United States of America, were considered by the Board; but it was decided that, in view of the serious nature of the disease, and the great loss which would arise should it find its way to the Dominion, the time had not arrived for withdrawing the present restrictions. It was, however, suggested that consideration might be given to the modification of the provisions relating to the importation of seeds from the United States of America, and this suggestion has since been acted upon.

#### AGRICULTURAL GRADUATES LAND SETTLEMENT ACT (SOUTH AUSTRALIA).

At the request of the Royal Agricultural Society, consideration was given to the advisability of introducing into the Dominion legislation similar to the Agricultural Graduates Land Settlement Act, 1922, of South Australia; but members generally considered that it was desirable to secure additional information before arriving at a definite conclusion on the subject. The Department of Agriculture was therefore requested to secure from the South Australian authorities a report concerning the working of the Act in that State. The Board was subsequently informed that a communication had been received from the Director of the Department of Agriculture, Adelaide, advising that little advantage had been taken of the provisions of the Act, only two applications for assistance having been made, both of which, it is understood, have been satisfactory to the applicants. A copy of the Act has also come to hand, and the matter will be further considered by the Board in due course.

#### DAIRY CATTLE IMPROVEMENT ACT, 1921 (SOUTH AUSTRALIA).

The remit of the Royal Agriculture Society requesting that the Department of Agriculture be asked to devise a scheme for the elimination of scrub bulls, on the lines of the scheme in operation in South Australia, was also discussed; but consideration of the matter was postponed pending receipt of further information, which the Department of Agriculture was asked to secure, concerning the working of the Dairy Cattle Improvement Act in South Australia. The Director of the Department of Agriculture in Adelaide was accordingly written to, and has replied in the following terms:—

“As to the Dairy Cattle Improvement Act, it has, in our opinion, proved very advantageous to local dairymen. Under this Act all bulls over six months old have been compulsorily licensed every year, enabling us to accumulate a sum of money which has been specially earmarked for the improvement of the dairying industry. Among the improvements brought about have been assistance towards the purchase of purebred pedigreed bulls of approved milking ancestry. This assistance has taken the form of a 60-per-cent. subsidy, payable from this fund. Together with the two Acts for which you have asked, I attach herewith regulations governing this subsidy scheme. In addition, the cost of assistance to herd-testing associations has been defrayed from this fund. I have pleasure also in enclosing copy regulations concerning herd-testing scheme.”

There has been no meeting of the Board of Agriculture since the receipt of this information, but the matter will be further dealt with at an early date.

#### DAMAGE TO HIDES BY FIRE BRANDING.

The Director-General of Agriculture submitted for the information and consideration of the Board correspondence which had taken place with the secretary of the New Zealand Tanners' Association regarding the damage caused to hides by fire branding. I was agreed that the present system of branding resulted in considerable loss to the producers, and the Board decided to recommend that all branding be done on the neck or shoulder.

#### COST OF PRODUCTION OF PRIMARY PRODUCTS.

The question of securing and compiling accurate data as to the cost of production of wool, butter, cheese, and other primary products, in order that the producers' position might be better understood, was discussed with the officers of the Department of Agriculture, and the Board generally approved of the work recently initiated in this connection by the Fields Division of the Department. At the present time sufficient data has not been obtained to enable any public statement to be made on the question, though a great deal of valuable information has already been secured.

## FERTILIZERS BILL.

A proposed draft Fertilizers Bill to replace the Act now in operation was considered in detail, and approved with minor amendments, the suggestion being made by the Board that the proposals should later be submitted for consideration to farmers' organizations and others engaged in the fertilizer trade.

## RABBIT NUISANCE ACT.

The Board decided to recommend that the Rabbit Nuisance Act be again consolidated and amended, as the experience of the Department has shown to be necessary.

## WILD WHITE CLOVER.

During the consideration of a paper prepared by the president on wild white clover in its relation to the renewal of pastures, the Director of the Field Division related the result of a series of experimental plots designed to make a comparison of the imported or Dutch white clover with that grown in the Dominion. The result showed that the New-Zealand-grown clover was much superior to that grown from imported seed, and the Board asked that an article be prepared for the *Journal of Agriculture*, giving a detailed account of the experiments, and that leaflets be circulated to the various agricultural and pastoral associations and farmers' unions throughout the Dominion for the information of their members.

## DEHORNING OF CATTLE.

This question was further considered by the Board, which decided to report to the Government that in its opinion the time has now arrived for the introduction of legislation to make dehorning compulsory, except in the case of stud and pedigree cattle.

## GENERAL.

Other matters which engaged the attention of the Board were:—

- (a.) The extension of the instructional services of the Department;
- (b.) Elimination of lice on sheep;
- (c.) Blackberry and contagious mammitis experiments;
- (d.) All-wool woolpacks;
- (e.) Importation of game birds; and
- (f.) The suitability of Wiltshire Horn Sheep for introduction into the Dominion.

Yours faithfully,

JAMES G. WILSON, President.

The Hon. Minister of Agriculture, Wellington.

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