

WOOL.

The year has been a disappointing one for the wool-grower. Market-values were low, and the clip was not up to the usual standard either in bulk or quality, due largely to the climatic conditions which ruled in late winter and throughout the spring months.

I append hereto extracts from the report of Mr. J. G. Cook, Wool Instructor:—

The bulk of the wool did not open up well, a considerable amount of it being discoloured, owing to its having been too long on the sheep in a wet condition, and, further, there was more tender wool this past season than has been the case for some years past, this tenderness or break in the fibres being due to the check the sheep received during August and September. At the opening of the first wool-sale, held in Auckland on 25th November, 1930, there was a fairly good attendance of buyers, but prices were very poor, and, although wool was in demand by the buyers, it was evident that their price-limits were low, with the result that much of the wool offered was passed in.

I attended the first wool-sale in Wellington, held on the 8th December, 1930, when there was a better attendance of buyers, but prices were still low, more especially for qualities from 46's up. In several instances during the sale the lower-quality wool fetched better prices than the finer-quality wool in the same clip, this being due to the fact that the coarser wool with a good length in the fibre was in short supply, whereas there was an oversupply of the 46's to 50's quality. The bulk of the wool is being shipped to the United Kingdom, with France, Germany, Australia, Japan, and Belgium buying in that order. The woollen-mills operating in the Dominion were able to secure wool suitable for their purposes, while Dominion woolscourers were operating more freely in their purchase of wool than they have been for some time past.

The following table gives the average prices realized at Wellington for the last five selling seasons, including any sales which were held in April:—

Year.	Bales offered.	Bales sold.	Average Price per Bale.	Average Price per Pound.
			£ s. d.	d.
1926-27	105,927	103,311	18 5 8 $\frac{3}{4}$	12.287
1927-28	110,388	108,979	24 10 5	16.511
1928-29	121,396	113,626	22 4 11	14.958
1929-30	91,629	74,093	13 11 4	9.204
1930-31	104,730	93,682	8 11 1	5.895

For the last five years for Wellington sales the average is £18 0s. 6d. per bale, or slightly more than 12d. per pound. The average price for the Dominion is generally only slightly higher than the Wellington average price, and, although the price for wool this selling-season has been low, when one considers the average realized over a five-year period, it can be seen that the prices have been very fair. The point shown is that in 1927-28 wool averaged over 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound, yet in 1930-31 similar wool averaged only slightly over 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per pound, a difference of 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound between the two above-mentioned years.

The number of sheepowners on the 30th April, 1930, was 30,022, an increase of 3,310 over the previous year.

During the past year practical demonstrations on live sheep have been given to farmers, pointing out to them the good points to breed for, and the bad points to avoid. In addition, practical demonstrations were given in various shearing-sheds as to the manner in which to prepare the wool clip in the most attractive manner for sale. Lantern lectures with suitable slides have been delivered, and all lectures and demonstrations have been well attended by the farmers.

Microscopic Examination of Wool Samples.—A considerable amount of this class of work has been carried out during the year, and reports thereon have been sent to the farmers concerned as a guide to them in avoiding the use of faulty rams in their ewe flocks.

RABBIT NUISANCE.

The control of rabbits during the year has given some concern, and although good work has been done in many districts there are no doubt some localities where the incidence of rabbits is less satisfactory than in recent years. This position is due to the seasonal conditions enabling rabbits to breed up quickly during the spring and summer months, together with low prices for furs and the financial depression which placed many settlers in the position of being less able to pay for the usual suppression methods.

For several years prior to this one the high price of skins induced a considerable number of experienced rabbiters to engage in the work of rabbit-destruction with little or no cost to the landowner, but early in the present season the value of furs receded to a point where the collection of skins ceased to be a payable occupation. Rabbit-control work at once became a direct charge on the landowner at a time when very few of them were in a position to employ extra labour. The altered conditions necessitated closer attention to rabbit inspection, with the result that a good deal of work has been carried out in most districts.

Strychnine poisoning is still giving excellent results, and, although a little more costly than poisoning with phosphorized pollard, is nevertheless in favour as a reliable destructive agent. On account of the increase in the pest, a heavy demand set in for phosphorized-pollard poison, approximately 20 tons being despatched from the Frankton Poison-mixing Depot in two months.

Rabbit Boards have, without exception, carried out their work in a satisfactory way, and rabbits in their areas are well under control. Under localized Board control the work goes on systematically throughout the year, and the conditions in the various areas under their jurisdiction are striking evidence of what can be done by systematic operations and continuity of effort.

As regards industrial rabbits (angoras and chinchillas) the interest once taken in them has now declined. Many who obtained permits to keep them have given up the business, and very few fresh applications are now being received.