

One of Sir Fred Aykroyd's big objections to New Zealand wools was the variation in diameter along the length of the fibre.

The only method to overcome the decided thinning during winter is by better feeding.

Another point which has to be realized is that the spending of extra money on better sires will not be repaid if the standard of feeding is such that the progeny are not able to maintain the improvement.

To bring about such better feeding it would seem essential to collect and survey information on what are our present methods and where the weaknesses lie which need to be strengthened. At the same time co-ordination of effort by all interested in the problem should be attempted. For example, grasses are being analysed for mineral matter, better strains of grasses are being produced, top-dressing is advocated and soil surveys are being made all more or less independent of one another, and certainly little attempt has been made to correlate them with animal production which should be the ultimate object of all the work.

2. *Breeding.*

To carry on the work of economical production, it is essential to improve our breeding methods by—

- (a) *Elimination of Scrub Sires*, including under this heading any ram showing obvious wool faults—e.g., hairiness :
- (b) *Testing to Breed from High Producers*.—It is obviously desirable to have our sheep capable of producing the maximum quantity of good-quality wool from a given quantity of feed. Any scheme for improving the quality of our wool without a consideration of the quantity of wool produced will end in a blind alley. The returns from wool are a composite of its quantity and quality and so one must not concentrate on one to the detriment of the other :
- (c) *Better Breeding Methods*.—Our present system of haphazard breeding, both in stud and cross-bred flocks, must be displaced by some definite system of breeding to a type if wool improvement is to lead anywhere. This particular point is of particular importance when considering wool-marketing, as it would naturally lead to fewer wool types in a flock and consequently a smaller number of lots when classing.

In Australia, there are three main types of Merinos—

- (i) Fine ;
- (ii) Medium ; and
- (iii) Strong-woolled—

each of which has a particular sphere of usefulness. It would appear to be necessary to have at least two types in our Romney breed, which has to supply the demands of such a wide range of types of soil and climate ; a strong-woolled type to meet the demands of the rougher country and a finer-woolled type to run on the better class of country.

Indiscriminate cross-breeding, except for the production of fat lambs, should end, as there can be but little doubt that it has done more to lower the standard of wool-quality than any other single factor.

3. *Improved General Management.*

There are a wide range of topics which might be mentioned here, but the three most important seem to be—

- (a) Greater care at branding-time to use brands which will scour out and also to confine the branding fluid to one portion of the fleece :
- (b) Greater care at dipping to eliminate dip-stained wool and to control keds, the presence of which detracts considerably from the appearance of wool when displayed for sale. The use of "bloom" or other strong staining-dips for show and sale sheep should also be discouraged :
- (c) Avoidance of vegetable matter in the wool by—
 - (i) Controlled grazing to check weed grasses and clovers ;
 - (ii) Treatment of bidi-bidi ; and
 - (iii) Feeding straw long instead of chaffed and on the ground instead of in racks.

4. *Improved Handling and Marketing.*

While 1, 2, and 3 are being attended to, attention must also be given to this side of the business. In this connection, the first essential must be improved treatment of the wool in the wool-shed. No system of reskirting, reclassing, or any other treatment can undo the harm done to wool by haphazard skirting, shearing in dirty surroundings, and general carelessness in the original shed.

Elimination of excess handling subsequent to shearing must also be attended to. Reclassing and binning of small clips of a mixed class of wool is essential, but the classing of larger clips should all be done in the shearing-shed. Every handling a fleece receives after rolling up adds to the cost and detracts from the appearance. If better breeding and feeding methods are adopted much of the outcry for better classing will cease, as it is only because our flocks are so mixed that so much classing is essential. In our better flocks a minimum of classing serves to satisfy even the most fastidious buyers.