

On the Land

GENERAL.

The oat crops are all turning out better than the preliminary estimates, and the final average for the Dominion should be several bushels in excess of the 35.65 bushels first set down.

Moeraki Estate, it is stated, is putting in 300 acres of wheat and 500 acres of oats this season (says the *Oamaru Mail*). Employment next harvest, to judge from similar activity in many other directions, should be plentiful.

Recent experiments have shown that the increased productiveness of partially sterilised soil was due to the increased production of ammonia, and that the increase in bacteria was the result of an improvement of the soil as a medium for bacterial growth.

Burnt seaweed makes potash, so do burnt clods; and so again does burnt bracken. Analyses show that as a potash manure bracken is very similar in nature to kainit, and may be used for similar purposes. In addition, however, ash contains a considerable proportion of phosphate, which adds to its manurial value.

The chief feature of the sale at Addington last week was the diminished entry in the store sheep pens, though the entry was again large. The yardings in fat sheep and lamb pens were about the same as at the last sale. The entries in the cattle section were fairly good, but the sale was slack. Fat Cattle.—Extra steers, to £17 5s; ordinary, £6 15s to £9; extra heifers, to £13 5s; ordinary, £5 17s 6d to £8; extra cows, to £10; ordinary, £4 17s 6d to £7 10s. Price of beef per 100lb. 28s to 40s. Fat Lambs.—There was a larger entry than at the previous week's sale, the number being approximately 3673, as against 1200 April 7, and 1500 the week before. As was anticipated, the sale opened dully, and showed no improvement as it progressed. Lamb was sold at about 5d to 5½d per lb. Prime lambs, 15s to 20s; others, 8s 3d to 14s 6d. Fat Sheep.—There was a large yarding of fat sheep, the bulk of the entry being ewes. Much of the offering was not prime, but what was prime met with fair competition. Prime wethers, 19s to 23s; others, 14s to 18s 6d; prime ewes, 18s to 21s 1d; medium, 13s to 17s 6d; others, 6s 10d to 12s 6d; merino wethers, 19s 3d. Pigs.—Choppers, 40s to 72s; extra heavy baconers, to 72s; heavy baconers, 60s to 67s; light baconers, 47s 6d to 55s—price per lb, 5½d to 5½d; heavy porkers, 35s to 40s; light porkers, 30s to 33s—price per lb, 5½d to 5½d.

At Burnside last week 210 head of fat cattle were yarded, of which the greater part were cows, heifers, and light bullocks, not many prime heavy bullocks being offered, and prices on the whole remained at previous week's values. Prime bullocks sold at £13 10s to £14; extra, to £15 10s; medium, £9 5s to £10 7s 6d; prime cows and heifers, £8 12s 6d to £9 17s 6d; extra, to £11 12s 6d; medium, £6 15s to £7 17s 6d; light and aged, £5 5s to £6 15s. Fat Lambs.—The yarding consisted of 1500, made up largely of medium-weight and unfinished lambs, and, as export buyers had only a limited amount of space allotted to them, bidding was slow and dragging, prices realised being fully 2s 6d per head under the previous week's values. Had it not been for the competition of graziers, a much further fall would have been recorded. Heavy prime lambs sold at 18s to 19s 3d; extra, 22s 6d; medium, 16s 3d to 17s 6d; light and unfinished, 11s to 13s 6d. Fat Sheep.—Every available pen was occupied, 5600 being yarded. Prime wethers were, however, in short supply; consequently the demand for this class of sheep was brisk at 1s under previous week's values. On account of the freezing works being practically blocked, export buyers were in a position to secure only a few pens, and as the supply was much beyond butchers' requirements a drop of 3s 6d to 4s per head on previous week's prices must be recorded, and even at the reduced values sales were difficult to make, a number of this class of stock having to be turned out unsold. Prime wethers sold at 22s 6d

to 24s 9d; extra, to 27s; medium, 20s to 21s 9d; prime ewes, 19s to 22s 3d; extra, to 26s 3d; medium, 16s to 17s 9d; light, 12s 6d to 14s. Pigs.—There was a yarding of 55 stores and 62 fat pigs. Baconers met with strong competition, and realised advanced prices. Porkers also met a good sale, but stores and weaners were not in request, and showed little improvement.

IDEAL DAIRY STOCK.

During the last ten years there has been a considerable improvement in the type of dairy stock kept on the average farm. This is certainly acknowledged by every dairy farmer, and all those who are interested in the breeding of dairy stock, particularly in the South of England. But there remains much yet to be done (says a writer in *Farm, Field, and Fireside*). Certainly the improvement is due in some measure to the increased number of live stock shows held annually throughout the principal agricultural counties, and the encouragement offered to tenant farmers to exhibit; also to the good work that has been done by various agricultural colleges and institutions of a similar type; and last, but not least, to the efforts of many writers in the columns of our agricultural press. These varied influences have slowly but surely had their effect. They have taught the dairyman to know his cows; they have pointed out the folly of keeping inferior and worthless animals; and they have indicated the proper measures to be pursued in the matter of breeding, feeding, and testing.

In dairying, as in most things, the question of breed looms large. The ideal dairy cow must essentially be of pure blood. It stands to reason that pure-bred cows, carefully selected, and mated with a sire of unimpeachable breed and reputation (not necessarily the same breed), are bound to hand down those fixed characteristics which may designate it as a heavy milking shorthorn, an ideal Ayrshire, or a rich, heavy-milking Jersey, as the case may be, to their offspring. It is here that the influence of the sire proves to be of such potency. The milking capacity of the female is said to depend more on the sire than on the dam. This is a point which many dairy farmers fail to realise; and the use of doubtful bulls of unknown origin and character is the common practice among a great majority. This necessarily hampers progress. As regards individual characteristics, it may be pointed out that the essential points of an ideal dairy cow consist chiefly of a wedge-shaped formation, wide at the hindquarters, tapering gradually to the front, with well-sprung ribs, a roomy 'barrel,' and a good straight level back. A good milking cow should show abundant width and depth across the chest: this denotes a healthy, vigorous constitution.

The head is an important indication. It should be neat in formation, narrow at the jaws, wide at the muzzle, showing strength of constitution, with broad forehead, and mild, full eyes. In the choice of a breed the farmer must of necessity be influenced by both climatic conditions and soil: but of all cattle the shorthorns appear predominant. They combine the important characteristics of milk production and the putting on of flesh. Hence they can be made to serve a dual purpose. For the breeding of crossbred animals Shorthorns are admirably adapted, and a splendid cross that tends to improve the herd all round is that of a carefully selected Shorthorn from a heavy milking strain and a purebred Guernsey bull from a well-known dairy herd. The first cross between these two types is the best class of dairy cow that I know of: and I would strongly advocate small dairy farmers who possess dairy cattle to the number of, say, twenty, to introduce pure Channel Island blood into their herd in this way. Nothing could give better results where butter-making is the staple industry, or, for that matter, where milk is retailed. It cannot be said that the Shorthorns ever fail to justify the good opinion that British dairy farmers have of them, except when they are introduced into uncongenial localities. The other breeds, such as the Ayrshires, Devons, etc., are no less useful in this respect.