

On the Land

GENERAL.

Many young horses are rendered permanently difficult to shoe by injudicious treatment on the occasion of their first visit to the forge.

Humus makes the soil more absorbent, enables it to retain moisture and warmth, permits air to enter, and allows the useful bacteria to work better.

Too much care cannot be taken in the storage of potatoes intended to be used for seed. It is as important to plant good potatoes as good wheat, if results are looked for.

Germany is becoming more and more dependent for food-supplies on foreign suppliers. The butter imports from Denmark within the last decade have risen by nearly 10,000,000lb.

Last year 430,283 tons of meat of all descriptions, including pork, rabbits, poultry, etc., were marketed at Smithfield, as compared with 433,723 tons in 1911. Of that quantity Australasia is credited with 91,688 tons frozen as against 96,780 in 1911; while frozen and chilled meat from South America amounted to 165,811 tons, against 152,312 in 1911. These descriptions together represent 59.9 per cent. of the aggregate of all meats marketed at Smithfield. The quantity furnished by the United Kingdom was 116,855 tons, being an increase of 18 per cent. upon the 99,038 tons marketed in 1911.

At Addington last week there was a representative yarding in all departments. The fat lambs forward totalled 7221. Best lambs made 17s to 19s 5d, and lighter 14s 5d to 16s 9d, as against 17s 6d to 21s 9d and 14s 2d to 17s respectively at the previous sale. There were 3100 fat sheep penned. The range of prices was: Wethers, prime, 19s to 22s 2d; lighter, 15s 11d to 18s 9d; prime ewes, from 16s to 20s; medium, 13s 6d to 15s 6d. The yarding of fat cattle totalled 250 head, as against 276 at the sale held the week earlier. The current price for beef was 22s 6d to 30s per 100lb, according to class. Steers realised £7 7s 6d to £11, extra to £15, 15s, heifers £6 to £10 7s 6d, and cows £5 15s to £9 5s. Pig were not in large supply, and consequently prices were firm. Choppers realised 63s to 80s, heavy baconers 60s to 75s, and lighter sorts 55s to 65s, equal to 6d per lb. Heavy porkers brought 46s to 52s, and lighter pigs 40s to 45s, equivalent to 6½d to 7d per lb. Large stores realised 32s to 38s, and smaller sorts 22s to 30s. Weaners made 13s 6d to 18s.

There were only moderate entries of all classes of stock at Burnside last week. The sheep forward totalled only 1751. The market opened very buoyantly, and though it eased off a little towards the middle, at the end of the sale prices rose again. Prime wethers sold at from 27s 3d to 30s per head. In some cases this constituted an advance of from 4s to 5s per head, the average advance being fully 2s 6d per head. The same advance was also registered in values for prime ewes. Sheep of an inferior class were not so eagerly sought after as were the better class. Although the number of lambs penned (600) was smaller than of late, there was an improvement in the quality as compared with previous sale, and freezing buyers competed with animation for anything suitable for export. Their competition, together with that of the butchers, caused an animated sale, the yarding being cleared at an advance of 6d to 1s per head, good lambs making from 19s 3d to 20s 9d. There was a very small yarding of cattle, the number penned being only 117. It was anticipated by members of the trade that this number would be insufficient for requirements; consequently in the earlier part of the sale prices boomed, showing an advance of fully £1 per head on last week's rates. This advance, however, was not maintained throughout the sale, as towards its completion values receded probably as much as 10s per head compared with opening rates.

RUAKURA EXPERIMENTAL FARM.

I was discussing experimental farms the other day with a neighbor (writes a 'Manawatu Farmer' in the *Dominion*), when he remarked that the Ruakura Farm of Instruction, about which we hear so much nowadays, cost the Dominion £8000 a year. I could not contradict my friend, but his statement made me more determined than ever to visit the Government's Waikato institution. I have just returned, and I have been well repaid for my trouble. It has not only given me much to think about, but has furnished me with a satisfactory answer to my critical neighbor. His £8000 loss disappears into thin smoke when the real factors of the case are considered.

In the first place, the return from the farm last year was just on £3500, and when allowance is made for the time given by the manager and his assistant officers to the three thousand odd farmers who visited the farm last year, and the five thousand, or more, letters written to inquiring farmers, it is seen that—even if the expenditure was something under £8000—the cost to the country was not so formidable, especially when it is considered that a large proportion of this cost was in reclaiming the heavy swamp land that has been rapidly brought into a high state of cultivation, and is thereby making Ruakura an enormous factor in the successful utilisation of such country.

One who has any acquaintance with the Waikato has only to spend a day on the farm to realise the immense benefits conferred on the farmers of the district by the practical and well-conducted experiments and demonstrations in operation. A full description of all the work in progress is beyond my capabilities. However, I will endeavor to give some idea of the main operations of the station.

The manurial and variety tests in connection with turnips and mangels are worth going a long way to see. The swedes are grown from seed, 'all out of the same bag,' as the manager put it. There are some twenty-five half-acre plots, sown at the same time and under the same conditions. Each plot has a separate manurial dressing. The difference in the appearance of the respective plots is most instructive, especially when they are compared with a plot labelled 'No manure.' A strip across the centre of the plots has been treated with a dressing of lime, making thereby over fifty different manurial tests. It is proposed to crop these plots for several years with a rotation of crops in order to test the lasting effects of the manures applied this season. The mangel field contains samples of practically every known variety of seed, while similar manurial tests to those laid out in the swede field are being conducted. Those who are unable to visit the farm (and every farmer who desires to make the best use of his land should certainly do so), I would advise to watch for the official results of these experiments, which will be published in the *Agricultural Department's Journal*. Manurial tests are also being conducted on pasture, and here the effects of the use of various artificial manures in promoting the growth of herbage is decidedly suggestive. Summer fallowing of land is going on in an adjoining paddock, but the result of this, of course, will not be apparent until next year. Lucerne of many varieties (the seed having been imported from all parts of the world) is growing under varying conditions. The object-lesson is a most striking one, and should specially appeal to the dairy-farmer. If Ruakura did nothing else but carry out valuable demonstrations in regard to growing feed for dairy stock, it would amply justify its existence. What it has done in connection with lucerne will yet prove of enormous value to Waikato dairymen.

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