

On the Land

MARKET REPORTS.

282 head of fat cattle were yarded at Burnside last week, being in excess of requirements, and as a consequence the bidding was very slow at the commencement of the sale, and this continued right to the end, when a considerable quantity were passed. A lot of good well-bred steers, primely finished, commanded keen competition, but for the rest the trade evidenced a very indifferent attitude in securing their supplies. The market showed a drop of £1 on prime finished cattle and up to 30s for medium sorts. Prices: Heavy prime steers up to £15 5s, prime to £11 15s, medium to £9. Fat Sheep.—1916 head were yarded, comprising a big proportion of wethers, some of which showed a decided lack of finish; the yarding generally being of very mediocre quality. The demand being limited, the bidding was very slow at the opening of the sale, and the tendency in this direction was more marked towards the end. Indeed, had the freezing buyers not steadied the market the easing off would have been more noticeable. As it was, several pens were passed and turned out unsold. On the whole, prices were down 2s on the last sale. Prime heavy-weight wethers brought up to 50s, prime to 45s 6d, medium to 37s 6d, ewes—extra prime to 39s 6d, prime to 36s, medium to 30s. Fat Lambs.—1099 yarded. Medium to very good quality. Competition was practically confined to freezing buyers, who operated keenly, graziers taking anything not suited for freezing requirements. Prices: Extra good to 46s 3d, good to 40s, medium to 35s. Pigs.—The entry was somewhat larger than that of the previous week. Porkers sold at about the same rates, while baconers were probably a trifle easier.

The entry of store sheep at Addington last week considerably exceeded 30,000, the bulk coming from Poverty Bay and various South Island provinces. The market slipped back in all classes of stores. Fat lambs sold at practically schedule values, but fat cattle dropped substantially and fat sheep slightly. Fat Lambs.—There was a small yarding of 2900, and prices were a shade easier than those of the preceding week, but still well up to export values, prime lambs making a full 12½d a head extra. Prime lambs made up to 47s 10d, prime 40s to 43s 6d, medium 37s to 39s 6d, light 34s to 36s 9d, store lambs 29s to 32s 6d. Fat Sheep.—There was an increased yarding, with a slacker demand in the earlier part of 1s 6d a head, but firming up later, the values being as good as on the previous week. Exporters bought freely at the lower export price of 1d per lb. Prime wethers made 41s to 47s 10d, medium 37s to 40s, light wethers 33s to 36s, prime ewes 35s 6d to 40s, medium 32s 6d to 35s, light 28s 6d to 32s, aged 24s to 27s 6d.

SEASONAL FARM NOTES.

Vacant Land and Catch-Crops.—An all-too-common feature of many farms in the latter part of the season is the large area of stubble and other land that has grown a crop—such as early turnips, tares, etc.—and which is left idle to grow weeds and accumulate rubbish for several months, or at least till autumn grass-sowing. This is sheer waste, for February, March, and April are all good growing months in which much may be achieved. Unless the land is excessively foul—in which case a fallow is indicated—the best plan is to run the cultivator or disks through the ground once or twice to germinate weeds. In the case of twitchy land the disks should not be used, but the twitch should be worked to the surface with the cultivator and harrows. After an interval of a couple of weeks the land may be ploughed and sown as soon as the weather conditions permit.

The utilisation of such vacant land depends upon the district, the requirements of the farm, and the length of time available. When grass is to be sown in March, white mustard makes cheap and easily-grown material for ploughing in: 15lb of seed and 2cwt of super should give a good crop. It is as well to remember that though mustard rots down quickly the land should be given a week or two's fallow before the grass is sown. If autumn feed is the main consideration there is still time to sow turnips—Imperial Green Globe, Hardy Green Globe, and Green-top Scotch (Aberdeen) being all suitable generally. In some northern districts swedes have been sown as late as March with success, but swedes are less adaptable than soft turnips, and less satisfactory for late sowing. Black skinless barley is another quick-growing catch-crop that will give good grazing for cows or sheep in eight weeks from sowing. In districts free from early frosts Japanese millet may be sown up to the end of January for March feeding, but not later, as it does not thrive in the shorter days and cooler nights of autumn. For later sowing and later use Algerian oats and rye-corn are both good winter grazing crops, while Western Wethers or Italian rye-grass can be sown in February for autumn or spring feed. A good mixture for average-quality land for grazing in May, and again in August and September, is—Western Wethers, 15lb; Italian rye-grass, 15lb; crimson clover, 5lb; red clover, 3lb; with super (or super and blood-and-bone), 3cwt. This mixture is purely temporary, but will yield double the feed of permanent pasture, and that at difficult seasons of the year. For South Otago and Southland a mixture of Scotch vetches or golden tares with oats, at the rate of 1 bushel of the former and 2 bushels of the latter, is recommended for early spring feed. In Central Otago rye-corn sown at the rate of 2½ bushels will prove very useful for either lambing ewes or early calvers.

Preparation for Grass-Sowing.—Many farmers will now be thinking of grass-sowing. In making up mixtures local conditions of

soil and climate must be taken into consideration; a mixture suitable to one district often does not give satisfactory results in another. In the preparation of land (where ploughable) an early start is invaluable, as it enables the killing of weeds that would otherwise harass and weaken the young grass. Consolidation of the seed-bed is highly important; clover in particular does not strike well on loose ground. When a crop has been fed off with sheep and the land is clean it is often better to disk rather than plough, so that the treading and the manure may not be lost.

Lucerne.—Provided the weather is seasonable, February is generally a favorable period for sowing lucerne. Compared with spring sowing, more time is available for destroying weeds, and there is less likelihood of a cold wet spell of weather following closely on the germination of the lucerne-seed and so checking the growth of the young plants. A frequent mistake in lucerne-culture is that of sowing too deeply. Sometimes one sees the ordinary fine harrows being used for this purpose, with the result that a large proportion of the seed is buried. A light brush harrow, or one made from strips of wire netting laced together and weighted at the end with bolts, will be found more satisfactory for covering the seed.

The coming month is also a good time for destroying weeds and grass which may be infesting stands of lucerne. As the lucerne is cut the land should be cultivated. If clean, a stroke of the fine harrows to keep the soil free is all that is required; but if dirty, stronger methods must be adopted. Young lucerne crops sown in November and December should be ready for cutting about the end of February, and will greatly benefit by a cultivation to keep the land free and destroy weeds. Under normal Canterbury conditions it is generally found economical to graze the last growth of established stands of lucerne. The cut is usually so light that it does not pay for working-expenses for haying. As soon as growth ceases, the land should be stirred with the grubber.

Root Crops.—The intercultivation of root crops should be continued as long as possible. This operation not only keeps down weeds, but conserves moisture and aerates the soil, greatly promoting growth of the crop. Thinning of the later-sown turnip and swede crops will also call for attention at this time.

Potatoes.—In the coming month the later potato crops will be given their last cultivation. Potatoes being essentially a cleaning crop, it pays to keep the cultivator going as long as possible. Preparations may be made for saving seed. Only those tubers free from disease should be selected, and although the storage of immature seed is not always easily accomplished the latter usually gives the best results. Medium-sized seed about the size of a hen's egg will be found the most suitable generally.—Fields Division, N.Z. Journal of Agriculture.

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