

1888.

NEW ZEALAND.

THE ANNUAL SHEEP RETURNS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MAY, 1887.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

Mr. B. P. BAYLY, to the Hon. the MINISTER of LANDS.

SIR,— Crown Lands Department (Live Stock Branch), Wellington, 23rd May, 1888.

I have the honour to furnish herewith the annual sheep returns for the year ending the 31st May, 1887.

The total number of sheep in the colony on that date was 15,155,626, as against 15,174,263 for the previous year, or a decrease of 18,637.

The District of Auckland shows an increase of 20,458; Napier, 74,374; West Coast, 111,721; Wellington, 14,025; Nelson, 8,883; Marlborough, 22,533; Westland, 1,219; Otago, 29,879; while in Canterbury there is a decrease of 301,729. In the North Island there is an increase of 220,578, and in the South Island a decrease of 239,215.

The classification can be taken approximately as: Merino—males, 3,055,769; females, 3,578,512. Long-wool—males, 574,824; females, 980,337. Cross-bred—males, 2,604,139; females, 4,362,045. Total—males, 6,234,732; females, 8,920,894; making a total of 15,155,626. A large decrease has taken place in merinos, a slight decrease in long-wools, and in cross-breds there is an increase of over 310,000.

A very considerable increase has taken place in the export of frozen mutton, 931,526 carcasses having been shipped during the year ended the 31st March last, or an increase of 224,559 over the previous twelve months. Napier supplied 155,057; Wellington, 209,785; Canterbury, 316,455; and Otago, 250,229.

The number of sheep boiled down amounted to 378,339, being an increase of 52,859, while 215,192 were preserved, or an increase of 128,316.

The imports have been very limited, only 126 sheep being introduced, and all of them from the Australian Colonies. The exports were 3,204 to the South Sea Islands, and 220 to Australia and Tasmania.

The infected list for the year ending the 31st March last shows the comparatively large total of 64,743, of this number only some twelve thousand were actually infected flocks, the remainder being made up through the whole of each station on which scab was discovered having by law to be declared infected, and no scab has been seen in any of these flocks since January, and all are now within fences. The outbreak was discovered in the first place on Mr. Bullen's Green Hills Run, at Kaikoura, on the southern extremity of the Marlborough District, and almost simultaneously another one was reported at Tophouse, on the boundary between Marlborough and Nelson. At Mr. Bullen's the infection was confined to about seven thousand, although the flock, numbering thirty thousand, had to be declared unclean. No scab has been seen there since January. The bush has been fenced off where danger existed, and thoroughly scoured, and one of the most experienced Inspectors has been specially detailed to supervise all operations; everything possible has and is being done by the owner to ensure eradication of the disease, and the sheep are now being mustered for a clean certificate. The infection was traced to bush lands, of which some fifteen thousand acres exist on the southern boundary of the run, to parts of which the adjoining flocks had access, and it is surmised that some stragglers were left out when the sheep were granted their last clean certificate, and that these reinfected the flock when this country was again restocked. As a matter of fact, this area was restocked too soon. At Tophouse the scab was clearly traceable to wild bush sheep. The case, however, was greatly intensified owing to the manager of the station having concealed the outbreak for a considerable time. Here again reinfection occurred through restocking bush country before sufficient time had been allowed for destroying stragglers and wild sheep. The infection extended as far as Mr. D. Kerr's Motupiko Station, which adjoins the Tophouse Block, and at that time not fenced off from it. The infection in this flock was very limited. The high bush country has been fenced off, and the sheep have again obtained a clean certificate.

At Tophouse fences have been erected, dividing all the rough country from the open land. It