

about thirty years ago—Border Leicesters and Lincolns—and had used these very freely amongst their flocks. They started twenty years ago to put the Border Leicester ram to the merino ewe, and afterwards occasionally used the Lincoln ram to the cross-breds. That, of course, was in the days when wool was the principal consideration. They preferred an infusion of Lincoln blood for the sake of the wool. Now that mutton was of more consequence to people who had country suitable for fattening sheep for export, they found that the greater the quantity of Leicester blood they had in their sheep the more profitable it was. They had endeavoured all along to select Border Leicester rams that carried heavy fleeces, and had improved the fleeces very much since the sheep were first imported; so that their Border Leicesters now, as they existed, were of a very different sheep from what they were thirty years ago. He thought Mr. Boag and Mr. Roberts knew that from their own experience, for they had endeavoured in their stud flocks to improve the fleeces, and knew that these had improved. He found that the hoggets, as Mr. Roberts had stated, bred from Border Leicesters were ready to export before they were two years old, and he considered that the quicker they could turn off their sheep the more profit they could make from their land. It was not profitable to keep wethers until they were four or five years old for the wool alone. They could do very much better by turning them off at from eighteen months to two years old, and thus turning over their capital quicker than they did in the olden time. Of course they could not do this but for the freezing. With regard to other breeds of sheep, in crossing he had had very much the same sort of experience as Mr. Roberts had had. His company had tried several of the Downs, and had a few still, as well as the Romney Marshes. While they were suitable for some purposes, for general profit and according to the average for New Zealand he thought that there was no better sheep than the Border Leicester to use for crossing purposes. The company of which he was the manager were exporting fifty thousand per annum, and had had considerable experience in that direction. He thoroughly indorsed all the statements Mr. Roberts had made in his paper. For the last sixteen years they had been trying to establish a cross-bred New Zealand flock. At the present time, when their ewes got too close up, they used cross-bred rams to bring them back. They tried merino rams for seven or eight years to produce "come-backs," as they were called, and did not find the result profitable, and therefore had practically abandoned it. Now they were studying what they could do with the cross-bred rams they had, so as not to get too close up to the pure-bred long-wool.

Mr. BIDWILL said the paper was a most important one for both Australia and New Zealand. They were all trying experiments in the way of crossing, and no doubt the cross Mr. Roberts recommended, and which Mr. Boag and Mr. Brydone had supported, must be good from what they had said. In the North Island the Border Leicester was only just introduced. Hitherto the cross had been with Lincolns and Romneys. It had been found that the Lincoln was too delicate a sheep to stand the wet, the young sheep dying off in great numbers through lung-worm and other parasites. They had found that with Lincolns the young sheep did not come to maturity, and at the present time the most favourable cross was the Romney, and there was a perfect rush for it. It was a closer- and denser-wooled sheep than that of the South Island. Recently, at the Woodville Farmers' Club, it had been stated by Mr. Nelson that it was the best cross, and the most suitable in that wet, rich country. There was no doubt that the Romney cross matured very quickly. His experience with the Romney last year was that the two-tooth wethers averaged 63lb. frozen weight in March. The Down crosses for freezing purposes and for lambs, as Mr. Roberts had admitted, would be the best, but if kept over the age of lambs it was almost impossible to keep the feet sound in anything like rich country. For crossing purposes very great care would have to be taken as to the nature of the climate and soil before they decided on the adoption of the Border Leicester, Lincoln, or Romney, or in fact any particular variety.

Mr. McNICOL indorsed what Mr. Bidwill had said.

Mr. PHILLIPS asked how they could account for the different breeds of sheep having arisen in the Home-country in such short distances. He took it that this discussion was for the benefit of their Australian friends. They had different breeds in the North and South Islands. They were trying the Border Leicesters and Romney and Lincoln breeds, and he would ask whether it would not be advisable to recommend Australians to try the three crosses rather than one.

Mr. GORDON noticed from the morning paper that Canterbury mutton brought $\frac{1}{4}$ d. a pound more than Wellington mutton. He wished to know whether that was the result of crossing, or of the difference in pasture.

Mr. ROBERTS, in reply, said that, in reference to Sir John Hall's remarks that there was a higher percentage of lambs from Down rams, that was admitted. There was a much higher percentage from Down rams than any other breed that he knew of. Mr. Brydone had touched upon a point on which most Leicester breeders had experienced much difficulty—that was, in getting a sheep decently well clad in wool. In Scotland, sheep were placed for prizes which would not be looked at in the colony. There the carcass was the first consideration, and, naturally, they produced what paid them best. Mr. Bidwill had said that the Leicester was just being introduced into the North Island. He (Mr. Roberts) thought he was the first who introduced it into Hawke's Bay, and the change was forced upon him by the extremely delicate nature of the hoggets produced by the Lincolns. The country seemed to him to be getting sick of Lincoln sheep. For the last two years they had been crossing Lincoln ewes with the Leicester, and found they had produced a sheep much larger, more robust, easier kept, and in every way more desirable than the Lincoln, except that they to a certain extent sacrificed the wool. He had not got their returns this year, but from those he had of last year he found that in the Leicester crosses the wool sheared 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. less than that of the Lincoln; but that was counterbalanced, inasmuch as the cross between the Leicester and the Lincoln was worth at least 1d. or 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. a pound more than the Lincoln. To his mind, the most important fact was that they had produced a sheep that thrives on the country. The difference between sheep thriving and the reverse was the difference between sheep-farming successfully and sheep-farming ruinously. The reason why he had selected the Border Leicester in preference to the Romney Marsh was that it was an earlier maturing