

1899.

NEW ZEALAND.

DANTHONIA AND CHEWING'S FESCUE GRASSES
(EXPERIMENTS OF AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT IN CULTIVATION)

Report to an Order of the House of Representatives dated the 20th September, 1899.
Ordered, "That there be prepared by the Agricultural Department, and laid before this House, a report on the results of the experiments being carried on by the Department in cultivating Dantonia and Chewing's fescue grasses."—(Mr. McEwen.)

Chewing's fescue and Dantonia seminarians for the poor lands of the Waikato. A considerable number of varieties of grasses were experimented with at Woodstock, Otago. Chewing's fescue and Dantonia seminarians were, however, the only grasses which proved a real success. Other indigenous species are being tested, but it is too early to form any opinion as to their adaptability to this particular work. That the above cannot have proved their value is amply demonstrated by the following extract from the report of Mr. Gilchrist, the departmental officer in charge of the Auckland District:—

"Fescue Pasture at Woodstock, Otago.—This six-year-old Chewing's fescue pasture of 70 acres is about the only real pasture on this light class of land that can be found throughout the whole of the Waikato, and its carrying capacity is unequalled. The stocking has been as follows: October to December, 1897, 100 sheep; December, 1897, to July, 1898, 170 sheep; July, 1898, to December, 1898, 210 ewes (those landed in the paddock—85 per cent of land); December, 1898, to April, 1899, 150 sheep. All these sheep improved, and were sold off in good condition. It is now intended to stock with cattle. Any comment on the value of such a grass for arid soil is needless; but of the persons interested in improving the stock-carrying capacity of large properties in this province, there are naturally few who care even to look at the paddock, and none seem to care to sow more than a few pounds per acre; they appear to prefer to follow the well-established over-recuring course of tarring, felling grass, and burning manure."

"Of the grasses that were grown at Woodstock next to Chewing's fescue, none of the indigenous grasses (Dantonia seminarians) were. It probably does not afford the same nutrition as the former, but it takes its place on even poorer soil. This grass is spreading on high areas from which the indigenous grasses have entirely disappeared, and now that attention has been directed to it, considerable interest is being manifested in encouraging the native grasses of New Zealand." Department of Agriculture, Wellington, 16th October, 1899.

Approved for publication: printed by the Government Printer, Wellington, 1899.

By Authority: JOHN MACKEY, Government Printer, Wellington, 1899.