

104. Now, with the extra weight of the North Island sheep, what do you think would be the difference in price per head on the London market? Would there be any difference in the value per head in the carcase in London?—What would be the weight of the Canterbury sheep—68 lb.?

105. Take the Canterbury sheep at 60 lb., but I think it is 57 lb.—the North Island sheep is heavier. The price is sometimes $\frac{1}{8}$ d. and sometimes $\frac{1}{4}$ d. more for the Canterbury sheep. Do you not think the heavier sheep, pound for pound, would realise as much on the London market as the lighter sheep from Canterbury?—I think it would be about the same.

106. You are aware that Southern buyers are giving more for sheep in the North Island than the local buyers are?—Yes; as soon as the South Island people came here last year to buy the companies put the price up 1s. 6d. a head at once.

107. Did you ever know the companies' buyers—take the Gear Company or the Wellington Meat-export Company, or any other buyers—offer a different price to farmers for their sheep?—No; it was always the same.

108. None of them will advance—they will simply keep to the same price all the time?—Yes. If one raises the price they all raise the price, and if one lowers the price the others will lower the price.

109. What is the rule with regard to lambs: what do the buyers demand in the matter of weight?—When they come to pick the weights, they always pick the heaviest they can find.

110. What would be the average weight?—They prefer the 40 lb. lambs and upwards.

111. They prefer the heavy weights?—Yes. They never take lambs of 32 lb. if they can get the others.

112. *Mr. Field.*] Are you a farmer on a large scale?—No; not very large.

113. How many sheep and cattle do you run?—I run sometimes between four and five thousand sheep and three hundred head of cattle.

114. Are you aware that there is a strong feeling of dissatisfaction amongst the farmers in this district as to the price they can obtain for their sheep?—There always has been. They are always grumbling. They say there is only a chance of getting one price because there is no one but the company to purchase them.

115. Is it your experience that there is only practically one buyer in this district?—There are two buyers, but they only give the same price.

116. From the buyers themselves have you ever had any indication that there was a combination between the two companies?—It would not do for the buyers to tell me that there was a combination.

117. Have they ever mentioned the price paid by the other companies?—Yes; they have said "That is what the other company is giving."

118. Do these companies encourage southern buyers to freeze with them?—I heard that a southern buyer had to go back because he could not get his sheep frozen last year. I heard that he had come up prepared to buy seventy thousand sheep, but that he could not freeze them here and it would cost too much to take them down to Canterbury. If he could have got them frozen here he would have saved the freight of 2s. a head besides the wharfage.

119. It has been said that every sheep sold here and that has gone to the Canterbury markets is used only for butchers' purposes?—I think they made a good price if they are for butchers only. A lot of them are frozen, at any rate, after they get down there, and are sent Home; but I could not be positive, because I do not know whether that is so.

120. Could you give us any idea as to the difference in value between a good North Island sheep and a good Canterbury sheep?—The difference at the outside would be 2s. 6d. For the sheep I froze this year I could not get my price, and I sent them Home. They averaged 6 lb. of fat each. Mr. Hurse said they could get 3d. a pound for their fat in Canterbury, but we do not get the same price here. There is no difference between our fat and their fat.

121. But has there not been a rise in the market?—No. Fat has been at a high price for the last few years—£35 a ton.

122. What has been your experience in the case of your own sheep in regard to the average of fat?—The average of fat in anything I have frozen has been $5\frac{1}{2}$ lb. all through. Take the last lot of nine hundred sheep in May: they had 7 lb. of fat. If they had been killed when Mr. Hurse's were they would have had 8 lb. of fat.

123. The farmers here complain that there is only one buyer, that the price is fixed for them, and that there is no opportunity for competing buyers. They are asked the question, "Why not freeze on your own account?" and they answer that they are only small growers?—Yes. When they say they want money they can only get 50 per cent. of an advance of what their meat will bring from the company. The company advanced me £320 on sixty bullocks, and they would have given £512 for them if they had bought them.

124. Is there any complaint about getting returns?—There is delay of six months from the time you send your stuff away until you get your returns. There is a good three months after they are sold in London. My beef was sold, I think, on the 8th June, and the returns are just to hand.

125. I understand the feeling to be in this district that what is wanted is competition or a market?—Yes; that is so, beyond doubt. That is the cause of dissatisfaction.

126. *Mr. Haselden.*] What class of sheep do you find buyers prefer? Do they go for heavy Lincolns or for crossbreds?—They go for the heavy sheep and leave the others. The fine lines are all right, but they are light.

127. Do they come again?—They come later on, but will not give you the same price as for the bigger sheep.

128. Do you think you are fairly treated at Home after the freezing?—Yes; but the commission is too high.