

members of the Committee would like to see it. [Produced.] The little brand I have produced has been on a carcase for three years. The sheep was taken out of the freezing-chamber and thawed, and then put back again. It was again taken out and thawed, and was left out for a fortnight. You will notice that the brand is perfectly secure. It is stamped with a rubber stamp on to the flesh, and there is no trouble in doing it. I have Mr. Cameron's report on the matter, which might be embodied in my evidence. You will see that stamps are used in the Gear shops. There are just two points that I wish to emphasize, and which Mr. Cameron strongly supports. That is the branding and grading of New Zealand meat. Undoubtedly last season a large amount of mutton and lamb went Home which was not up to the usual standard. The reason for it, I understand, was that it was a bad season, and great difficulty was experienced in getting the lambs by people who had contracts to fill. They could not help themselves, and consequently a lot went Home that were not up to the proper standard. A great deal of mutton has gone Home about which complaints have been made. The matter is important, because, seeing that we have so much competition, we ought to see that everything should be done to insure that only first-class should go Home.

121. You have confined your statement practically to two proposals, and in the first place you state that all meat going Home should have a brand on it?—Yes.

122. Now, I assume that you mean this brand should be an authorised guarantee-brand to be put on all carcases leaving the colony?—Yes. We put the "vet." tag on all the carcases going Home, but it is only a parchment tag, and can be taken off at any time.

123. Having given your attention to the subject, you are of opinion that an indelible brand on the flesh would be suitable?—Undoubtedly.

124. Has your attention been called to a lead brand used to clasp on shank with a piece of wire, which is used in America?—Yes; that can be taken out, but you cannot take ours out.

125. Your opinion is that branding is essential to assist our meat in being sold on its merits?—Yes, certainly. If we send Home first-class meat we should have it branded as such.

126. With regard to grading: to some extent the Government have agreed to grading. Has the Department done anything in that direction?—No; we have not seen our way to approve of graders to be employed by the company, and I hesitate very much about saying that we should approve of them.

127. Do you think the colony's meat should be graded in the United Kingdom?—I would not take the grading of any of the works here, because there are too many different grades. If we grade "first" and "second" quality, that is all we should do. The sheep could then be graded afterwards to suit the various markets. Supposing that a man got one thousand first-class sheep, he could grade them afterwards as he desired. You would then get over the trouble in connection with a number of consignments going Home. It is a rather difficult thing to get the number necessary to make up a consignment owing to the large range of weights, and if you got initially a large number of consignments they could be put into a common pot.

128. You have no objection to the company's brand being put on afterwards?—No; they can do what they like.

129. *Mr. T. Mackenzie.*] You want the grading done so that if one thousand sheep go Home they can be kept to a certain quality and weights?—I think they can tell the quality, but they may be of different weights. I would not grade them for weights; I would let the people at the works or the scales do that. We should grade them without any reference to weights at all.

130. What is your opinion about grading for weights?—I do not think it is of very much value, because I notice that sometimes you get a very lanky sheep with no flesh on him.

131. I am talking about grading a first-class prime lot?—That has been done.

132. I take it that you want them classified as first-class and second-class qualities?—Yes.

133. Supposing you graded a lot as first-class, would you like the works to grade those?—I would not like to express an opinion on that, because I do not know that I have sufficient knowledge of the market at Home to say what weights would be the best.

134. You have quoted Mr. Cameron's opinion with regard to branding?—Yes.

135. Is your judgment formed largely on Mr. Cameron's opinion?—To a large extent, and from my own opinion formed a long time ago. In 1899 I had sheep sent Home with this brand upon them, and he has given a favourable opinion of it. I have always tried to get that carried out since.

136. Do you think Mr. Cameron's judgment is sufficiently thorough and extensive to guide him in forming an opinion of this sort?—I do not know, but he is a very intelligent man, and gives interesting information in his report; and I should think that, outside of the vested interests that have been mentioned to-day, he would give a very good decision.

137. Are you aware that there has been evidence given before this Committee by leading men in the trade condemnatory of the prosecutions which have been conducted by the Agent-General?—I did not know that. They have not expressed any opinion to me about it at all.

138. What is your opinion of the result of the prosecutions?—I should not like to express an opinion. I should like to see the meat branded, and then prosecutions would not be required.

139. But in the absence of branding?—Well, prosecution protects the colony to a considerable extent. I think it is necessary that we should protect ourselves.

140. *Mr. Hornsby.*] Can you give the Committee any information regarding the difference in point of value between North Island prime sheep and the Canterbury prime sheep?—I am afraid I could not. I have had experience of the sheep of both islands, but it is some time since I had any practical experience except in regard to one small lot. I know that we had a small lot of sheep on the west coast of this island to sell, and I communicated with the Christchurch people as to whether they could sell them for me, and they told me that if they were mud-fat to send them down; if not, not to send them at all. Those sheep were on turnips, and we got 16s. for them. There was a considerable amount of trouble in getting 16s. I estimated that putting them down in the Addington market would cost about 4s.