

The carcasses were landed from the steamer, and were delivered at the cold-air chambers in excellent condition, although it was a fortnight after the arrival of the vessel in dock before they came to hand. On stripping the sheep to examine them, they were found to be bright and hard; and though some of them had got chipped, as is so commonly occasioned by handling them, they presented really a fair sample of the condition in which the bulk of the frozen mutton arrives from New Zealand.

The brand ("V.R., New Zealand," with the representation of a crown), with the signature of the Inspector at the freezing-works from whence they came, had been applied to each carcass in six places—one on each leg, loin, and shoulder. These brands were neat and clear. In one or two instances there were rather fainter impressions than desirable, but these only proved that care would have to be taken, by whoever might apply the brand, in seeing that the work should be done properly.

After satisfying myself that the brand was satisfactory when the meat was in a frozen condition, I proceeded to test the result of thawing on the brand. I had two carcasses sent up to Smithfield on Monday morning, and hung on the rail in the C. C. and D. Company's stall there. I left them there thawing until Thursday, exposed to the atmosphere as they would be in any butcher's shop. Each day I noted the result. Thawing had not the slightest effect on the brand. The meat, as usual, got dull in colour, and consequently the brand was not shown up so clearly as when the meat was hard and bright. But otherwise it did not alter. There was no drip or weeping from the brand, and, although I and others tried to disfigure it by rubbing with a cloth, we found it impossible to do so. We also tried to scrape it off with a knife, but found that unless the outer skin was removed the brand was ineffaceable. Although perfectly satisfied with this I next determined to find out if the brand would be destroyed by cooking. I therefore had a leg of the mutton roasted on Sunday—that was after thawing for a week—and, although, on being placed on the table, there was a slight black spot or two noticeable when looked for, there was nothing that would be more observable to an ordinary carver than there might be on any other leg of mutton when roasted in the usual way. When I cut the roasted skin off and, stretching it, allowed it to dry, I found that the brand came out quite clearly when held up against the light. This, I think, was conclusive the brand was indestructible.

Considerable interest was taken in the brand by many interested in the meat trade, and although, as was to be expected, the necessity for branding New Zealand mutton was ridiculed by almost all who saw it, it was unanimously allowed that if a brand was desired that now exhibited seemed to answer every purpose required.

Personally, I think most highly of this brand. The lettering being small, considerable care may have to be exercised in applying it, though, of course, not knowing the nature of the brand or how applied, I may be wrong in this. The guesses as to the nature of the brand have been many. Some think it is applied by an electric stamp; others think it is caused by some chemical application; while others, probably trying to create an ill-feeling against its use, suggest that if chemicals are used the brand may be found injurious to health. Of course, I do not know the nature of the application, but I have assured those who spoke in this manner that the New Zealand Government would never permit the use of anything to which the slightest suspicion of injurious effects could be attached.

The brands on the legs had been applied in the proper place. Those on the shoulders were too high up in many instances. Butchers in cutting up the carcasses could trim these brands off. The brand should be applied nearer to the fore leg. The position of the brands on the loins is not so important, as nearly all butchers take the skin off when trimming the loin for sale—but it would be advisable to place them close to the backbone rather than towards the sides.

The opinion of those interested in the sale of meat, both wholesale and retail, in this country is entirely antagonistic to meat-marking, and it is often said that by marking New Zealand meat the colony would suffer loss, owing to the refusal of butchers, especially those who now handle it and sell it as English, to buy it if it was marked. They also contend that consumers would object to receiving their meat with a brand on it, so that as the demand fell off prices would recede and the New Zealand trade would be ruined. They also say that the "teg" trade, which is a West-end one, and admittedly one pandering to the unjust and illegal substitution of New Zealand meat for English, would be destroyed, and consequently prices for this class of meat would be certainly greatly reduced. Well, all those things may be to some extent true. I quite believe that for a time, if branding was generally adopted throughout New Zealand, prices for that meat would suffer. The opposition to branding would be so great that they would be lowered. But I do not think that this would continue for any great length of time. Those buyers who are now selling New Zealand meat on its merits, and who keenly feel the opposition of those who by fraudulent means—especially by selling inferior meat as New Zealand at lower prices than they can do—injure their trade, would be in favour of the brand. Butchers who now sell New Zealand meat as English would either have to sell it on its merits or fight opposition from those who would be then in a position to open shops offering to their customers the genuine New Zealand article at a fair price, with a guarantee that they were being supplied with what they asked for. At the same time New Zealand producers, or the Government, would be so enabled to advertise the meat extensively throughout this country that I believe in a very short time the demand occasioned by this advertisement would equal, and gradually exceed, what it now is, in spite of the opposition of so many of those at present engaged in the trade. Just now there is no point on which to seize when advertising New Zealand mutton. Any advertisement that may be made, as things are, only helps the sale of all frozen meat alike. I do not think, however, that it would be advantageous, in face of the present feeling of the meat-traders here, for any one company to brand their meat independently of the others. That meat would certainly at once challenge opposition, and, by being boycotted, the owners would probably suffer severely. If New Zealand