

Another great drawback was the state of the roads, it being impossible for some time to get the feed taken to where it was required. As an instance, it cost £2 per ton to get it carted from Fairlie to Burke's Pass, and in most places they could only pack very light loads.

On the whole the settlers and tenants are very cheerful under the circumstances, and feel very grateful for the help from the Government in moving their stock and taking the feed free for them. It has been a hard and anxious time, and it is only by seeing it on the spot during the worst that it can be realised.

I have visited over fifty holdings and my son over fifty, and I forward a list of details up to the time inspected, but the loss cannot now be stated, and it will not be known until after lambing and shearing, as the sheep, after being so much handled, and also after getting on to feed, are sure to die in large numbers.

W. H. WILLIAMS,

Crown Lands Ranger.

T. Humphries, Esq., Commissioner of Crown Lands, Christchurch.

DAMAGE BY RECENT SNOWFALL.

Department of Lands and Survey, District Office, Dunedin, 9th September, 1903.

In accordance with the directions contained in your Memorandum No. 18809 of the 4th ultimo, I requested Messrs. Dallas and Kirkpatrick to accompany me on a tour of inspection through certain portions of this district, for the purpose of ascertaining how the recent snowfall had affected pastoralists and others within the area over which it extended.

The result of our inspection goes to show that the storm appears to have been somewhat erratic in its course through the district. The greatest snowfall seemed to have extended from the Waitaki watershed through central Otago *via* Kakanui and Rock and Pillar Ranges on the south-west side as far as the Clutha River, and thence along this river in a northerly direction to Queens-town, and from there to the head-waters of the Waitaki River. All the country outside this belt experienced severe weather but not sufficiently exceptional to cause a great loss of stock. The extraordinary feature of the snowfall within this area was that on the higher ranges less snow fell than on the lower levels, the consequence being that in many cases the stock on the high levels fared better than those on the low country and plains. Another noticeable point was that on the high and broken country the wind cleared a few of the exposed and sunny slopes, and some of the sheep were enabled, principally by the exertion and assistance of their owners, to get on to these bare patches and survive for a time. Within the area affected the depth varied from 15 in. to 42 in. of snow, and this actually fell in less than twenty-four hours. The experience of stock-owners is that coming so heavily and suddenly the sheep were unable to make to their usual camps at night, and remained where they had been grazing, or were driven by the storm to the cold and shady sides of the gullies, thus rendering the work of rescue much more difficult than it would have otherwise been, as they had to be searched for all over the country on which they had been running.

By reference to the notes taken in connection with each station or farm visited, it will be seen that the estimated loss varies greatly according to the position and conditions of each. In some cases the loss on the small farms will be but very little, as the limited area and number of stock rendered it an easy matter to bring them into the homesteads and hand-feed them with hay, oaten sheaves, and roots, of which fortunately there happened to be in most cases a plentiful supply this season. As the area of holdings increased, the difficulty of feeding also became greater with the further difficulty that in the case of the majority of the larger runs it was impossible to reach the sheep at all. The more energetic of owners or managers were, however, out daily making tracks through the snow, clearing patches of tussock, and dragging the sheep on to these cleared places. This work entailed great hardship and exposures, and only the more vigorous were enabled to carry it out. In the cases of the largest runs this means of rescue was rendered almost impossible, except in one or two instances. Another difficulty was that in some cases the wind had no effect in baring the country and all efforts were ineffective, as there was no country or tussock on to which the sheep could be dragged or taken.

By our attached notes and tabulated estimates, it will be seen that the loss will not be so great as at first anticipated, although sufficiently serious to constitute a great aggregate mortality, and also in almost every case considerable individual loss. In many instances it means financial difficulties, and in others the work of years to recover lost ground. In the greater number of the properties or lessees visited by us a measure of relief would be greatly appreciated, and we think also it would be necessary to enable them to carry on and recover the loss now sustained. It might be added here that the estimated present shortage of stock will be greatly increased between this and shearing, more especially among the ewe-flock, many anticipating a great mortality during lambing-time among both ewes and lambs. This shortage cannot be made good for years, as the present prices and decrease of sheep all round will render it impossible to restock except by the natural increase of each man's flock.

In the accompanying statement showing the result of our inquiries we desire to point out that the runs, farms, &c., visited by us represent—more especially as regards the pastoral leases—the greater number of those who suffered considerable loss through the snowfall. A great many others, however, have had their stock and resources severely tried, and will no doubt require and apply for relief. The amount involved will, however, we think, not amount to much.

In suggesting a measure of relief we would respectfully recommend (1) that a Relief Bill be made to apply to all Crown tenants; (2) that claims submitted to the Land Board should be supported by documentary statements and evidence on oath.

D. BARRON.

WM. DALLAS.

HUGH H. KIRKPATRICK.

The Surveyor-General, Wellington.