

Benmore: This run embraces three separate leases—No. 1, University endowment, 96,000 acres, of a carrying-capacity of 32,000. No. 2, Canterbury District, 83,000 acres, carrying 8,000. No. 3, Otago District, 133,880 acres, carrying 32,000. Although the rent paid for the University endowment is £3,000, the carrying-capacity of the run in this district is equal to that of the endowment. The endowment block is depastured by breeding-ewes and young ewes. The hoggets were running on the Diadem Range and have suffered most. A small lot of the weakest hoggets, about 2,000, have all died, and of the balance of 9,000 half are expected to be dead. The balance of wethers and dry sheep, 21,000, have fared better than either ewes or hoggets, but even with them it is hard to make an estimate, as the dead are lying in lots ranging from one to twenty, and these are scattered all over the country, making it very difficult to arrive at the death-rate, and, apart from this, they appear to be dying now daily, partly from wool-eating and weakness. Taking the flock as a whole, the loss will total about 20,000—i.e., say, 8,000 on Otago Crown lands.

Aviemore Station; Mr. Cameron, lessee; Runs 243A and 243B; 49,610 acres: The carrying-capacity of this run is 14,200 sheep, consisting of 4,500 ewes, 3,000 hoggets, and 6,700 wethers and dry sheep. The ewes were running on the Parson's Creek, Otamatata Block, and were, of course, on the most accessible country. They have, however, suffered on account of the wind at the time the snow fell having driven them into the shady sides of the gullies, and these perished through cold and want of food. The shortage among the ewes, Mr. Cameron thinks, will be more than the average loss of the flock. Hoggets on this run were running principally on the back or wether country, and appeared to have weathered it better than the other sheep. Wethers were on the Forks country, and had to remain where the snow found them for about four weeks, when the bulk of them got out to the sunny faces, and the consequent loss was not so great as that among the others. Taking the loss upon the whole, Mr. Cameron does not think it will average more than three or four thousand, or, say, 25 per cent. No sheep were hand-fed, as they could not be reached to get them out.

B. Munro; run, Ahuriri Islands: Number of sheep on above, 430; number of cattle, 40. Three hundred sheep had to be brought down to Otamata and fed with hay and turnips. The remainder could not be found at the time. Cattle were taken up to Omarama and there fed with the oaten stack and paid for afterwards.

W. Munro; small grazing-run: Eight hundred hoggets. Of these, so far, one hundred skinned, and a loss of another hundred anticipated.

SIR,—

Alexandra, 26th August, 1903.

We, the undersigned Crown tenants occupying adjoining Crown lands on the Old Man Range, Cairnhill, and Leaning Rock Survey District, Otago, respectfully beg to submit to you the unfortunate position in which we are placed by reason of the unprecedented severity of the winter and snowfall in central Otago. The loss among our sheep will be disastrous; we are not yet in a position to say exactly what it will be, but have every reason to fear it will be more than 50 per cent. Owing to our distance from the railway and the entire stoppage of traffic, we were unable to take any advantage of the Government's offer of free railage of stock and fodder.

We are now faced with this position: We are unable to pay our half-year's rent, due in six weeks, and pray that enforcement of payment thereof be suspended pending application to the Land Board under "The Crown Tenants' Rent Rebate Act, 1900," for relief. And we further respectfully request that in view of our disastrous losses, which will cripple us for years and render us unable to pay our present rents, you will introduce a measure on the lines of "The Pastoral Tenants' Relief, Act, 1895," to enable us to apply for reduction in our annual rent. We would point out that the past winter has been the most disastrous ever experienced here, and that our position is entirely due to this cause. Our lands are on a very high level, and were in the very heart of the storm, and the snow is still lying on them to a considerable depth. Unless we are afforded the relief asked for our positions will be ruinous, and we shall not be able to hold our lands. Our holdings are very poor country, and the previous tenants had to surrender them on account of the heavy losses incurred.

We would respectfully ask that, in view of the premises, we be afforded relief as above. For a precedent we would refer you to the relief afforded Crown tenants in 1895, which year is not to be compared with the present year for severity and consequent losses of stock.

We are, &c.,

JOHN BUTLER,

Bald Hill Flat.

STEPHEN T. SPAIN,

Earnsclough, Clyde.

CHARLES BROS.,

Earnsclough, Alexandra.

The Hon. the Minister of Lands.

Department of Lands and Survey, Christchurch, 14th September, 1903.

In further reply *re* estimate of losses of sheep in north Canterbury consequent upon the severity of the present winter: It has been impossible to obtain in so short a time details sufficiently reliable to be published; and only a very rough calculation can at present be made, as almost everybody objects to give any estimate until mustering and shearing time come. The extreme back country has suffered but little more than during ordinary winters; but the middle country runs, extending from the Rakaia to the Clarence Rivers, have suffered, and in some cases where southerly faces predominate, as on the Oxford, Te Koa, and other runs, the suffering has been great. The