

## FROZEN MEAT.

*Mutton.*

Taken all round, the price realised for New Zealand mutton during the official twelve months has been a satisfactory one. Though not so high as the previous year, the average—4½d. per pound for Canterbury and 3½d. per pound for North Island mutton—that was realised must be considered a fair price. Trade on the market at no time, however, could be considered brisk. During the latter part of 1905 it was very quiet, and prices dropped as low as 3½d. per pound for Canterbury and 3½d. per pound for North Island. River Plate was then in very large supply, and was strongly pushed for sale at about 3d. per pound, and the competition of it was somewhat severely felt.

I recently noticed in a New Zealand paper a letter from a correspondent to the effect that New Zealand mutton had the command of the markets in the south of England, and that the River Plate shippers confined their attention to the north, leaving the London market alone. I know this opinion is held by many in the colony, and am desirous therefore of pointing out that this is incorrect. The importation of River Plate mutton to London alone during 1905 was 1,033,230 carcasses. As that country at the same time sent shipments direct to Cardiff, Southampton, and Plymouth, ports in the south of England from which distribution took place, as well as to east coast and northern ports, it will be readily understood that the bulk of the London arrivals were distributed in the immediate vicinity of that market. River Plate mutton is now as generally sold in the south of England as it is in the north. During the year, shipments were received on the London market for the first time from Uruguay and Patagonia.

It cannot be said that New Zealand meat during the past year has shown improvement in quality. Complaint was often made of the scarcity of carcasses of suitable weight and condition. They were generally said to be too heavy. Owing to the scarcity of light weights, these often commanded a premium of ½d. per pound over others. The information given from week to week by cable has kept the producers in the colony well posted up in what has been going on in the mutton-market here.

Although trade throughout the country in New Zealand mutton has been steady, I regret that I am unable to report any expansion in distribution, which seems to have remained much the same as formerly.

*Lamb.*

For the first half of the official year—that is, during the summer months—prices of New Zealand lambs were high. Opening with a good demand at 5½d. per pound for Canterbury, and 5½d. per pound for other brands, prices did not fall below 5½d. for the former and 5½d. for the latter until the end of July, when there was a slight decline. Towards the end of September, however, the market became depressed. Stocks on hand were very heavy, and, although there was a scarcity of prime quality, prices fell to 4½d. per pound on average. Declining still further, 3½d. per pound for Canterbury and 3½d. per pound for other brands was all that was realised about the middle of November, after which, although the market continued dull and prices low until the beginning of the new season's arrivals, a slight recovery on these figures was experienced. The new season has opened fairly well at about 5½d. for Canterbury and 5½d. for other brands. Owing to the very heavy supplies on hand and coming forward from Australia, it is not expected that prices will be nearly so good this coming year as last.

Trade in New Zealand lamb in this country is now widespread, and the repute it has attained is highly satisfactory. The inclination, noted in my report of last year, of provision-merchants to include New Zealand lamb in the lines handled in their shops has continued, and is now very general indeed. This species of distribution is one to be encouraged.

As in the case of mutton, the cablegrams sent weekly have given very full reports concerning the lamb-market.

*Beef.*

I regret it is impossible to report with satisfaction upon the market for New Zealand beef during the past year. Prices have been, if anything, a shade higher, averaging 3½d. per pound for hind quarters and 2½d. for fores. The competition from Argentine continues very severe, the supplies from there, both of chilled and frozen beef, having been very heavy. On the other hand, the shipments of beef received from New Zealand have been light.

At no time during the year has there been a satisfactory demand for frozen beef, but in spite of this the market has been kept free from the fluctuations that in some former years occurred.

*Fraudulent Meat-sales.*

Although complaints have been received from all parts of the country, as in former years, concerning the fraudulent meat-sales practised by many traders to the detriment of those anxious to conduct an honest trade in New Zealand meat, I have not to report any prosecutions undertaken by this Department for the prevention of the practice. In order, if possible, to bring about a discontinuance of the fraud, however, letters have been issued from this office drawing attention of those known to be trading unfairly to convictions that have already been obtained, and warning them of the seriousness of the offence. I am of opinion that this warning has been of considerable benefit, although it is undoubted that the fraudulent sale as New Zealand meat of inferior meat from other countries is still rife throughout the country.

## CHILLED-BEEF SHIPMENTS.

During the year two experimental shipments of chilled beef were made from the colony. In one instance the meat was found on arrival to be in some degree frozen. When placed on the market it was sold at a price slightly higher than that ruling for frozen beef from New Zealand. The extra price