

staining through partial thawing, and other allied defects. The result of such damage to our meat is to make it compare unfavourably with that from other countries, and it has, moreover, the effect of causing loss to the producer, not only on account of any decline in market value consequent on the damage, but by the fact that it leads to insurance claims being made and allowed, and naturally a proportionately high premium has to be paid by the shipper in New Zealand. There are numerous and varied causes contributing to this damaged condition, some of them being as follows: Sorting in the hold, associated with the multiplicity of marks and numbers and small parcels sent from New Zealand; the breaking-up of consignments after arrival into lots for delivery to various destinations; method of stowage, leading to delay in completing orders; the fact that most of the meat has to be stored at a distance from the docks, thus entailing double handling; exposure to weather during discharge; general rough handling. It does not seem possible to point to any one circumstance as being the cause of the damage; it would appear to be rather the result of a combination of circumstances, some of which, under existing conditions of discharge and handling, cannot be eliminated.

In view of the wide interest taken by meat-growers, I venture to summarize some figures which will be of interest to them:—

Table showing Imports of Refrigerated Meat from All Sources for the Years 1910, 1911, 1912, and for the First Three Months of 1912 and 1913.

			Mutton and Lamb.	Frozen Beef.	Chilled Beef.
1910	New Zealand	...	5,407,470	344,048	...
	Australia	...	4,219,012	533,598	3,844
	South America	...	3,353,726	1,484,841	1,593,181
	Total	...	12,980,208	2,362,487	1,597,025
1911	New Zealand	...	5,223,783	165,598	...
	Australia	...	3,611,051	520,345	...
	South America	...	4,125,350	1,522,845	2,152,026
	Total	...	12,960,184	2,208,788	2,152,026
1912	New Zealand	...	5,495,251	157,853	...
	Australia	...	2,883,505	732,781	...
	South America	...	3,603,378	1,806,067	2,221,659
	Total	...	11,982,134	2,696,701	2,221,659
First 3 months of 1912	New Zealand	...	973,114	17,836	...
	Australia	...	1,284,809	14,799	...
	South America	...	1,061,045	375,901	468,253
	Total	...	3,318,968	408,536	468,253
First 3 months of 1913	New Zealand	...	1,045,240	20,455	...
	Australia	...	1,443,822	110,340	...
	South America	...	950,718	472,106	574,879
	Total	...	3,439,780	602,901	574,879

The foregoing figures show that, reckoning frozen supplies from all sources, there was a decrease of almost one million carcasses of mutton and lamb in 1912 when compared with the imports of the previous year. This decrease, combined with other factors, tended to maintain prices at a high level throughout the year, and prevented any accumulation of stocks, the last factor resulting again in the maintenance of satisfactory prices during the first three months of the present year.

During 1912 there were various circumstances which influenced the prices of frozen meat: the Home supply was smaller than normal owing to the bad season; foot-and-mouth diseases reduced the supply considerably, as imports from Ireland were stopped; and the unsettled state of labour had its influence on the markets, both beneficial and otherwise. With those disturbing factors fluctuations in prices were only to be expected, and the weekly returns show that these occurred.

North Island lamb in January, 1912, commanded 5½d. per pound; during the dock strike in June it rose to 6½d., and then gradually decreased until in November it stood at about 5½d.; another rise then ensuing on account of rumoured labour troubles in New Zealand. Canterbury lamb showed similar fluctuations, opening in March at 5½d.—5¾d., touching 7d. and 7¼d. in June and then gradually falling to 5¾d. in October, rising again slightly towards the end of the year. Mutton and beef have also fluctuated very much in price: North Island mutton has ranged from 3½d. to 4½d., and Canterbury from 4½d. to 4¾d. per pound; fore quarters of New Zealand beef from 2¾d. to 3¾d., and hind quarters from 3¾d. to 4½d.