

conditions affected the market price of sheep, which at the beginning of the year were as high as £1 6s. for breeding-ewes, and towards the end could be bought for 13s. Cattle were a good price throughout the year, dairy cows ranging from £6 to £10. The dairy factories were kept busy during the year, the output of butter and cheese showing an increase on former years. There was a considerable increase in the area of crops sown, particularly in wheat, which in the majority of cases was a failure owing to the drought. Fortunately, the high prices realized for grain somewhat compensated the farmers for their light crops.

The southern portion of the district, which is principally open country, suffered severely from the drought—probably the worst that has been experienced for forty years—consequently feed during the latter part of the year has been very scarce, and the outlook for the winter as far as grazing is concerned is serious. There was a larger area of crops sown, which in most cases were failures. The dairying industry, which is not carried on to any great extent in the southern part of the district, was also affected by the drought. Fortunately the high price of all produce has compensated in a measure for this.

WESTLAND.

On account of the moistness of the climate and the uncertainty of successful harvesting, no cropping is done except for the purpose of providing winter feed for stock. The weather-conditions that have prevailed during the past year have been very favourable to the growth of grass, but the dairying stock has felt the effect of the excessive amount of rain, which during the five months ended 31st March, 1915, reached a total of 70 in. distributed over 103 days. The average milk-yield per cow shows a shortage as compared with previous years, but in the case of those factories that did not enter into a contract for disposal of their season's output at a fixed figure the enhanced prices ruling for butter and cheese will counterbalance the shortage in supply.

The prices ruling for fat stock fluctuate in sympathy with those in other centres, and generally compare very favourably with them. During the winter the supply of fat stock is somewhat limited, owing to the greater length of time required to fatten, on account of the adverse weather-conditions. The prices paid for butter-fat by the butter-factories averaged 11½d. per pound, and by cheese-factories 10½d. per pound, while it is anticipated in the case of two of the latter that a bonus of 3d. per pound will be paid.

During the past year there has been a considerable increase in the number of fat cattle and sheep raised. It is estimated that upwards of five thousand head of fat cattle and ten thousand fat sheep were sold by public and private sale. These figures are the actual production of the Coast, and that they will show a marked increase in the future can be gauged by the fact that an additional three thousand head of store cattle from Canterbury were imported into the province during the last summer months. It has been proved beyond all doubt that dry seasons in Canterbury and Nelson force growers and dealers to export their surplus stock to the Coast, where there is a certain rainfall and always abundance of feed, and the quality of fat stock has been of an exceptionally high standard. The climate favours the Hereford breed of cattle, and they thrive remarkably well. On some stations there is a preference for the Shorthorn, and the Hereford-Shorthorn cross, but for beef the Hereford is preferred.

In the far south, difficulty confronts the growers in getting fat stock away from these parts, and the long drive of over two hundred miles militates against delivering cattle at the fat-stock sales in finished condition. It is probable that in future the stock-growers in the far south will specialize in the raising of forward stores and selling at Wataroa, which has now become a saleyard centre. The progress of the southern district may be gathered from the fact that permanent sales are now being held at Waitaha, Harihari, and Wataroa. Throughout the province the dairying strains of cattle are yearly improving, and the herds now compare favourably with most other parts of the Dominion.

There has been a marked improvement in the quality of the Romney sheep raised in the district, as is clearly demonstrated by the fact that at the wool-sales in January, February, and March of this year clips from the West Coast topped the New Zealand market at each sale, the excellent price of 1s. 5½d. per pound being obtained for one lot. Much more attention is now being devoted to wool-growing, and farmers are keen to improve the strain, a number of pedigree flock ewes having been imported last season. The latest returns show that in the Grey County there are 28,197 sheep, and in the Westland County 31,516 sheep. These figures denote a steady increase.