

By a fortunate occurrence a large shipment of wool had been made from Port Chalmers immediately prior to the fire occurring, otherwise the loss would have been very large.

A smaller fire occurred about the same time in a wool-store occupied by Messrs. De Pelichet, McLeod, and Co., Port Ahuriri. No wool was destroyed, but damage by water resulted in a loss for reconditioning-expenses and depreciation of £505.

Previous losses of wool by fire had been—

March, 1917—Dewe and Sporle's wool-scouring works, Feilding, 482 bales greasy and scoured wool, £10,566.

June, 1917—Wilson and Canham's fellmongery works, Auckland, 77 bales slipe wool, £2,060.

FREEZING COMPANIES' SLIPE WOOL.

In accordance with arrangements made with the Imperial Government, valuations of slipe wool have been made periodically at freezing-works during the year, on the basis of a schedule of prices equivalent to the net average prices realized in New Zealand during 1913-14, plus 55 per cent.

At the greater number of freezing-works the slipe wool has been displayed for valuation on the premises, and 2s. 6d. per bale has been allowed for the extra labour involved.

Freezing companies who have not suitable accommodation on their own premises for this purpose have displayed their wool for valuation at approved shipping stores, and in such cases an allowance of 5s. per bale has been made.

Payment for slipe wool valued has been made on the fourteenth day after the date of valuation, and has been held thereafter on behalf of the Imperial Government, storage at the rate of 3d. per bale per week being paid to the freezing companies.

Out-of-pocket expenses for wharfage and lighterage incurred in placing the slipe wool on board ocean steamer, together with the cost of the bills of lading, have been defrayed by the Government; all other charges up to the point of shipment on board ocean steamer have been borne by the freezing company concerned.

In case of any dispute in respect of the valuation between the valuer appointed by the freezing company and the valuers appointed by the Government provision was made for revaluation by an umpire, but no appeal against a valuation has been made by any freezing company during the year.

To the 31st March, 1919, 68,959 bales had been purchased subject to valuation in the United Kingdom under regulations ruling to the 31st March, 1918, and of this quantity 65,130 bales had been shipped to the United Kingdom and 1,795 bales to other Governments. 63,201 bales have been valued and purchased in New Zealand, and of this number 18,440 bales have been shipped to the United Kingdom and 7,604 bales to other Governments. The total payments for freezing companies' slipe wool were £3,660,957.

The Imperial Government, in accordance with the wishes of the owners, having agreed to extend the purchase of slipe wool on the same basis to be coterminous with the purchase of greasy wool, the necessary action was taken, and a Proclamation issued by *Gazette* notice on the 25th January, 1919, extending the purchase of freezing companies' slipe wool up to the 30th June, 1920.

SHEEP-SKINS.

The purchase of sheep-skins on the basis of 55-per-cent. advance on 1913-14 prices has been continued on the same conditions of purchase as obtained to the 31st March, 1918.

The scale of values on which sheep-skins are purchased was fixed as follows:—

	Merino Skins.	Half-bred Skins.	Fine Crossbred Skins.	Coarse Crossbred Skins.
	d.	d.	d.	d.
Three-quarter to full-woolled sound skins	10½-11½	13-14	12-13	11½-12½
Half-woolled sound skins	8¾-9¾	11-12	10½-11½	10-11½
Short to quarter-woolled sound skins	7½-8½	9¼-10¾	9¼-10¾	8½-10¾
Shorn sound	5¾-6¾	8-9	8½-9½	8-10
Lamb-skins, sound	11-12½			