

All skins with damaged or faulty pelts are valued at prices proportionate to those shown above.

In valuing green or salted sound skins allowance is made for the extra value of the pelts as compared with dried sound skins of similar quality.

Seedy skins are valued at lower values according to their condition. Black skins are valued according to their proportionate value to ordinary skins of the same class.

Wherever the conditions are suitable skins from sheep slaughtered at abattoirs are valued daily on the abattoir premises, and treated on the same day at neighbouring fellmongeries.

FELLMONGERING.

Sheep-skins are allocated to fellmongers by the Department immediately after valuation, and are during treatment under close inspection by Inspectors of Fellmongering-works specially appointed for the purpose.

The resulting wool and pelts after valuation are required to be redelivered to the Government through the Government agents at the customary shipping ports, baled or casked, and branded as directed.

Fellmongers have been paid for their services at the following rates :—

Fellmongering	..	..	2½d. per pound on weight of wool.
Curing pelts	..	..	3s 9d. per dozen (casks extra).

To the 31st March, 1919, 4,082,415 had been purchased, at a cost of £1,581,413.

Results for the 1917–18 season show that 1,935,722 skins, valued at £652,419, an average cost of 80·89d. per skin, were issued to fellmongers for treatment. The average pull of wool was 4·03 lb., and the average percentage of valueless pelts was 10·36. The amount paid to fellmongers for slipping wool and curing pelts was £99,316.

The standard of the work carried out by fellmongers continues to be well maintained, and the results are distinctly satisfactory to all concerned.

It is worthy of remark that this very large business of wool-scouring and fellmongering, treating an aggregate of £2,622,610 worth of raw material annually, and distributing in wages, material, railages, &c., £472,120 per annum, has been carried out by the Department with great advantage not only to the Imperial Government, but to the manufacturers and workers in New Zealand.

More than double the quantity of wool has been annually sorted and scoured in the Dominion than in any year prior to Government control, and all the sheep-skins produced have been fellmongered locally, no export being permitted. This, with careful distribution giving consideration to the capacity of works and the quality of the work done, has contributed to a continuity of well-paid work to all employees.

Under private trading a few of the wool-scouring and fellmongering works undoubtedly did first-class work, but the output of the majority was second rate. Under Government control the best methods and workmanship have been acquired by all, fullest advantage having been taken by wool-scourers and fellmongers of the knowledge and experience freely placed at their service by the Department's experts in each particular line.

The reports of the users of New Zealand scoured and slipe wool and pelts are that the general standard of work is immeasurably higher than in previous years.

HIDES AND CALF-SKINS.

The purchase of hides and calf-skins on behalf of the Imperial Government ceased at the 28th March, 1918; only those hides and calf-skins produced from stock slaughtered on or before that date have been purchased in the current year. The total purchases of hides and calf-skins were 370,508, for which £725,339 was paid.

At the 31st March, 1919, 43,941 were still held at the disposal of the Imperial Government.