

ruled during the year, North Island prime medium weights selling up to 11d. per pound. The price offered for lamb by exporters has induced a great number of farmers to go in for raising fat lambs. This has caused a great demand for Southdown, Shropshire, and English and Border Leicester rams, the first-named being exceptionally keenly sought after. For back-country farms the Romney is still the most popular breed, and prices have been nearly double last year's. The Corriedale has been introduced in large numbers from the South Island.

The prices for beef have been disappointing. The demand has been very limited, and although stocks for most of the period have been light, the position has been dominated by Argentine chilled beef. Prices realized at the local fat-stock market at Westfield have been slightly in excess of those quoted for export. Young cattle, especially well-bred steers, have been very scarce, no doubt owing chiefly to the fact that the majority of dairy-farmers for the past two or three years have been killing their bull calves.

*Freezing Operations.*—The freezing season opened early in December with keen competition amongst exporters of all classes of lamb and mutton. Later beef was in demand for some two months and a half, but eased off considerably. The prices offered for the larger part of this season's frozen meat have been: Prime lamb, woolly, up to 42, 9d.; shorn seconds and overs, 8½d.; wethers up to 64, 6d.; wethers up to 64–72, 5½d.; ewes up to 64, 5d.; ewes up to 64–72, 4½d.; ewes, overs and seconds, 4d.; beef, prime ox, 21s. to 22s. 6d.; beef, prime cow, 17s.

The quantity of stock killed during the period 1st April, 1922, to 31st March, 1923: At Southdown—Cattle, 4,213; sheep, 6,768; lambs, 73,724; calves, 2,810. At Moerewa—Cattle, 7,018; sheep, 15,967; lambs, 49,275; calves, 101.

*Land Board Work.*—During the year the Land Board held twelve ordinary and two special meetings, occupying in all forty days. The total number of items on the order paper amounted to 3,330, of which 1,289 were in connection with Crown lands business and the balance, 2,041, related to soldiers-settlement business.

*Freeholds.*—During the year the total number of ordinary Crown-land holdings made freehold was fifty-nine, the total area being 7,162 acres. Most of these areas were O.R.P. holdings, the terms of the leases of which expired. Under the heading of "Lands for settlement," seven holdings, totalling 26 acres, were freeholded, being mostly small areas in the suburbs of Auckland.

*Revenue and Arrears.*—The total revenue received during the year under all headings was £48,702. The falling-off as compared to last year is attributed to the sales from timber (State forest) and the conversions to freehold. The settlements have also shown a decrease, mainly owing to postponements granted. The number of selectors in arrears was 420, the sum of £15,243 being involved. Of this amount £11,128 is owing by 127 soldiers. Postponements have been granted to fifty selectors totalling an amount of £3,856. The amount of rebates earned by 1,158 tenants was £1,332.

*Land open for Selection.*—In addition to numerous isolated sections opened during the year, several blocks of land were subdivided and thrown open for the first time. The Koheroa Block, near Mercer, consisting of eight sections, totalling 2,200 acres, of easy undulating clay and swamp land, opened early in the year, remain unsettled. The reason is not apparent.

The ballot for the Pakepakarau Block, referred to in last year's report, was, on the contrary, a large one. All the sections were disposed of at the ballot, and the number of applicants far exceeded the amount available. The class of successful applicant was on the whole good.

Ten sections on the East Coast Road, only five miles up the coast from the Takapuna tram, averaging 40 acres, were thrown open last April, but remain unselected. It is difficult to understand why these sections were not selected, as the price was reasonable and they are very handy to town. It is probable that most of these sections will be selected during the ensuing year.

The Paiaka Block, near Hukerenui, on the Whangarei line, consisting of twelve sections averaging 200 acres each, was opened in November. The land is easy undulating clay land, and about half the sections were selected.

The Waari Hamlet sections still remain unselected, and steps have been taken to have them withdrawn from soldier settlement and opened for general application. They should then be taken up, as they are very handy to town and the terms and prices are very easy.

Over thirty rural educational reserves were offered for lease. Most of them are still unlet. These leases do not seem to be popular for some reason. Leases of building-sites near Auckland, however, find a ready sale at good rentals.

*Lands to be opened.*—Amongst the lands to be dealt with during next year are the following:—

Birdwood Block, comprising nineteen sections totalling 267 acres. Most of these sections have been ploughed and grassed, and in many cases fenced. They should form ideal fruit-farms within a very easy distance of Auckland, and will be available early in the New Year.

Several large blocks considered suitable for settlement under what is known as the "homestead" section of the Act have been subdivided or schemed out, but opening is deferred pending the stabilization of the financial situation. Amongst these blocks may be cited the Mangonui East Block, 9,000 acres; Taipa Block, 3,000 acres; Akatere Block, 5,600 acres.

The Omaunu Block, 2,231 acres, and the Waipu No. 2 Block, 2,570 acres, have been surveyed, but have been held up on account of the cost of formation of access roads. In the Omaunu Block in particular the cost is somewhat prohibitive compared to the value of the land. The Tokawhero Block, of 2,033 acres, has also been held up on account of the long access road which had to be formed. This has now been done, and the sections should be thrown open about September.

The Poroti, Mangakahia, and Otaika Gum Reserve, totalling altogether 1,200 acres, have been or are being subdivided into areas not exceeding 200 acres, and it is proposed to have the sections thrown open under that section of the Act which gives the lessees the right to occupy the land for the first five years rent-free. It is hoped by this means to get these gum lands well settled.