

"The production of wool in the 1935-36 season has been computed as—greasy wool, 625,240 bales; slipe, 91,992 bales: a total of 717,232 bales."

The end of the season found a very small carry-over in the stores, the estimated total being 49,400 bales as compared with a carry-over of 186,679 bales at the end of the 1934-35 season. A feature of the 1935-36 wool season was the constant demand for all classes offered, and the relative uniformity in prices from the beginning to the end of the selling season. The destination for the year ended June, 1936, of only approximately 35 per cent. of the number of bales sold was the United Kingdom, whereas, during the year ended September, 1934, over 56 per cent. of New Zealand wool, and in the year ended September, 1935, over 58 per cent., was exported to the United Kingdom.

As was the case a year ago the world wool position seems distinctly satisfactory from the viewpoint of New Zealand producers, but, of course, unexpected developments later may affect the market. Recent decreases in the world's sheep population, which in the case of some countries are quite substantial, have been recorded. France's sheep population, for instance, has dropped from 14 millions in 1914 to 9·8 millions in 1933. On the other hand stocks of cross-bred wool at consuming centres were at March of this year brought down for the first time for many years to a normal figure, and the maintenance of the current consumption might lead to higher prices. Taken in conjunction with the present demand for wool it seems of some significance that the estimated world's annual production of raw wool, which has been declining steadily, was approximately two hundred million pounds less in 1934-35 than it was in 1928-29. Recently—i.e., April, 1936—the Imperial Economic Committee stated: "Factors contributing to the present healthy statistical position of wool have been the fashion trend in the East, particularly Japan and China, where wool tissues enjoy a growing popularity and the consequent industrial development in those countries (more particularly in Japan)."

The estimated average lambing percentage in 1935 was 86·31; this is substantially less than that of 1934, which was 89·24, and indeed less than that of any year since 1930. However, because of the increase in the number of breeding-ewes in 1935, the total number of lambs estimated for 1935 did not fall as much as the decreased lambing percentage would at first sight suggest; the estimated number of lambs for 1935 was 15,373,642, while for 1934 it was 15,680,393 estimated and 15,689,492 actually tailed. The lowered lambing percentage is considered to be due partly to the existence of facial eczema in some ewes when the rams were put out and partly to the fact that the season was not a good one for lambing in certain districts.

The interim return of sheep as at 30th April, 1936, gives a total of over 30,000,000, which is an increase of nearly 1,000,000 on the previous year's total and which is the second highest total recorded—the peak year was 1930 when 30,841,000 sheep were in the Dominion on 30th April. To some extent the sheep population as at 30th April, while of customary accuracy as a return, does not represent the true position in the sheep industry. This is because the figures relative to 30th April reflect the late killing-season. Since 30th April slaughtering of wethers and lambs has proceeded much more freely than is usual at this season—approximately 160,000 more sheep were slaughtered during May and June, 1936, than in the same months of 1935 and, of course, the increase of 1,000,000 in sheep population is reduced by this number at the end of June. For the nine months ending 30th June the killings for export were: Lambs, 8,766,757 carcasses in 1935-36 and 8,782,242 carcasses in 1934-35; wethers, 1,143,311 carcasses in 1935-36 and 940,401 in 1934-35; ewes, 735,962 carcasses in 1935-36 and 1,179,092 carcasses in 1934-35. The sharp decline of 443,000 in the killings of ewes points to the strengthening of the number of breeding-ewes by including a larger proportion of old ewes. Some interest attaches to the fact that the killings of breeding-ewes were high last year and again in 1931-32—both years in which wool prices were abnormally low.

Apart from an increase of 112,000 in the freight carcasses of boneless beef for export, the available returns do not point to any material change in the beef-production. Probably any substantial future change in that respect will be correlated with developments in chilled-beef production.

While the normal high quality of New Zealand meat has been well maintained, it seems to behove us to ask whether this suffices in view of developments in the world's meat trade. It probably may be said with truth that quality is of more value in meat-marketing now than it ever was before. Some of our competitors in the world's meat-markets assiduously have been increasing, not only their output but the quality of that output. In regard to lamb, for instance, the point may have been reached where there is danger that our supremacy in regard to quality—a supremacy which is so valuable to us—may be challenged. The New Zealand sheep industry cannot face such a possibility with equanimity. Fortunately there is no clear reason why its previous valuable eminence in respect to quality of lamb and mutton cannot be maintained.