

The wool-clip this season was moderately heavy. The number of sheep shorn was greater than ever before, and the yield was a record, but as the price was approximately 1d. per pound lower the aggregate return was about the same as last year, between £9,000,000 and £10,000,000. A very disturbing feature of the prices has been the low return for fine wools, which have been, if anything, a little lower than coarse wools.

The future ahead of fine wools is not promising. No doubt prices will rise beyond their present low level, but whether or not the high prices of the past will ever be again realized depends largely on the future of staple fibres, the production of which is increasing enormously. One point is perfectly clear: the total world's supply of wool is not now anything like sufficient for the total requirements of goods which at one time were manufactured entirely from wool. Thus substitutes have become a necessity in world trade. However, the fact that staple fibres by themselves are not suitable for replacing woollen goods in their entirety makes it apparent that the full production of the world's wool is in no danger of oversupplying the market. One does not infer, however, that wool substitutes will not check wool-prices, and this check is more likely to be felt in the fine than in the coarse wool trade. The matter is one of particular significance to our mountain-sheep industry, where the returns are almost wholly derived from fine wools and where the returns per sheep are low.

THE PIG INDUSTRY.

With a drop in butterfat-production during the past two seasons of over 16 per cent. it is not surprising that the total weight of pig-meat produced this year shows a distinct decline of several thousand tons. This reduction, however, is not viewed as in any way permanent, and the stage is well set for considerable development in our pig industry. Prices are satisfactory and are likely to remain so, and the prospects for expanding consumption of both frozen baconers and frozen porkers on the British market are extremely good.

On my recent visit to Great Britain I paid particular attention to this trade, and, provided we can supply the type of carcass required, there should be no difficulty in developing an expanding trade, particularly in baconers. The introduction of the present baconer-grading system is welcomed by British curers, and it is giving considerable satisfaction, as it enables purchases to be made with reliance that deliveries will be up to the required standard. However, one note of warning must be sounded: the overfat baconer has a very limited and restricted market in the United Kingdom, and with the expansion of the industry every effort must be made to reduce rather than increase this type of carcass. Provided a reasonably long and reasonably lean carcass is produced, there is no fear that expanding production in New Zealand cannot be satisfactorily marketed in the United Kingdom. The frozen baconer is popular with curers, and, although only a small proportion of them at present handle appreciable quantities, expanding numbers of suitable export pigs will cause many more to become regular buyers of our exports.

In reviewing the prospects for our meat-export business it can be said that the future for both pigs and chilled beef is extremely favourable. Apart from appearance, the meat quality of our baconers and chilled beef is highly satisfactory and the avoidance of overfatness in the pig and the improvement in the bloom and external appearance in our chilled beef are the two major factors in the attainment of an expanding and stable market for these products. Regular rather than intermittent delivery is also essential, and in the baconer industry the successful wintering over of growing store pigs is necessary.

The work of the District Pig Councils, which were brought into being through the utilization of the pig levy for instructional purposes, has been excellent, and these Councils, with their instructional supervisors, are of the greatest value in developing modern pig management throughout the Dominion.

BEEF INDUSTRY.

It is pleasing to note that considerable expansion is taking place in beef cattle in New Zealand. An increase of over 200,000 beef cows within the past three years has taken place, due largely to the developing chilled-beef industry. If this expansion can be continued and thus improve the ratio between cattle and sheep on much of our sheep-breeding country, particularly in the North Island, it will be of great advantage.

Probably the weakest feature of sheep-breeding country in the North Island has been that the employment of cattle in sufficient numbers to enable the country to be improved for sheep and at the same time limit pasture deterioration has been too expensive. With an improvement in beef prices, both for store and fat animals, this expenditure is likely to be considerably reduced. If this can be done and our run-cattle stock augmented, one of the greatest problems in hill-country-land