

1887.
NEW ZEALAND.

THE ANNUAL SHEEP RETURNS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MAY, 1886.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

Mr. B. P. BAYLY to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,— Colonial Secretary's Office (Stock Branch), Wellington, 4th May, 1887.

I have the honour to lay before you the annual sheep returns for the year ending 31st May, 1886.

The total number of sheep in the colony on that date was 15,174,263, as against 14,546,801 for the previous year, or an increase of 627,462—viz., Auckland, 13,158; Napier, 174,662; Taranaki, 1,274; Wanganui, 1,127; Rangitikei, 83,285; Wellington, 87,148; Nelson, 10,975; Marlborough, 12,968; Canterbury, 93,867; Otago, 148,998.

The classification can be taken approximately as: Merino—males, 3,083,201; females, 3,851,379. Long-wool—males, 574,279; females, 1,010,731. Cross-bred—males, 2,420,590; females, 4,234,083. Total—Males, 6,078,070; females, 9,096,193: making a grand total of 15,174,263.

The returns again this year show a very considerable increase in long-wools and cross-breds, whilst merinos have decreased nearly 300,000; the total increase in the North Island being 360,654, and in the Middle Island 266,808.

I have to draw your attention to the large increase that has taken place in the export of frozen meat. During the year ended 31st March last, 706,967 carcasses of mutton have been shipped, or an increase of 132,775 over the year 1885. Of these, Auckland furnished 19,913; Napier, 157,800; Wellington, 140,302; Canterbury, 235,631; and Otago, 153,321.

The number of sheep boiled down amounted to 325,480, and the number used at preserving-works, 86,876. The increase in the number of sheep boiled down is very marked, being 256,266 more than last year.

The imports consist of 1,680 sheep from the Australian Colonies, and the exports to 2,824—viz., 19 to Australia, 110 to New Caledonia, and 2,695 to the South Sea Islands.

The infected list for the year ended 31st March last shows three flocks still remaining with an aggregate of 10,909 sheep. Two of these flocks have since obtained clean certificates, leaving only the Okukari flock unclean, and it is now about to be mustered for final examination. Should it come in clean, as there is every reason to believe will be the case, all the flocks in the colony will be free from scab.

It is just possible there may be a few wild infected sheep in the Kaikoura Subdivision which have not yet been destroyed, and every effort is being made to completely exterminate them.

Three outbreaks in small flocks occurred during the year: One in the Wairarapa, one in the Sounds, and one at Hopefield, in the Amuri.

On a close investigation being made, the Wairarapa one was distinctly attributable to the fact that, in reality, the flock could never have been clean, although it had obtained a clean certificate a few months previously. It has since been subjected to such close supervision and careful treatment that not the slightest danger exists of re-infection.

The one at Hopefield was of a more serious nature, especially as the flock had been shorn for two seasons without showing the disease. This outbreak was plainly traceable to bush stragglers on the rough portion of the country; and the evil intensified through the manager concealing the fact for several months, after being aware of its existence. Vigorous measures were adopted, and several convictions obtained for breaches of the Act. The sheep are now believed to be clean, with every probability that they will remain so. Fortunately the outbreak was confined to the one flock; the adjoining flocks have since been mustered for shearing and other purposes, but no further disease has been seen.

The small flock in the Sounds, which was found to be diseased, has broken out twice, and on each occasion the infection was found in, and confined to, a few sheep that actually ran about the homestead; and no scab was found in the bulk of the flock, or the bush sheep, where it might have been expected. On this occasion continuous dipping was carried out for a longer time than usual, so that all chance of becoming reinfected from latent causes might be removed.