

FODDER PLANT (*Lathyrus Silvestris*).

Some time ago a quantity of this seed was received from London, and distributed. Lately circulars were sent out to those who had the seed, with a request that they would advise the department of the result of their experiment. The bulk of replies received state it to be a comparative failure; but, as in Europe it has a great reputation as a fodder-plant, a further quantity of seed has been secured, and is now being distributed. I am, however, afraid that, although satisfactorily grown, the cost of the seed required per acre (12lb. of seed, at 10s. 6d. per lb.) and the time elapsing (three years) before it arrives at maturity will militate against its being used here to any great extent.

## DAIRYING.

This industry may now be said to have taken a firm footing, as is shown both by the large increase in the number of factories erected and produce exported. The number of factories and creameries in operation this season was 104, being an increase of 32. A considerable number are now in course of erection, and new companies, on a co-operative basis, are being formed. This system has been found to work most satisfactorily.

During the season three experts were engaged lecturing and giving practical demonstration in the manufacture of butter and cheese, and in putting New Zealand manufacturers in possession of the latest information. The Agent-General has been instructed to try and secure a first-class man as Dairy Instructor, having a thorough scientific and practical knowledge of the business. He may be expected in time for next season.

The Dairy Industry Act passed last session came into operation rather late to allow of shippers getting their trade-marks registered, and therefore its provisions were not strictly enforced. Inspectors, however, will be appointed before next shipping season, to see the branding clauses given effect to. Several complaints have been received of the quality of some of the butter shipped, and on inquiry this was found to apply principally to "farmers'" and odd lots. The shipping of inferior and mixed lots is not only a loss to the individual shipper but does an incalculable injury to the trade, and the only way of preventing such is the manufacture of all produce for shipment on the factory system.

The Agent-General has devoted much attention to the question of securing a uniform temperature in the chambers on board ships carrying produce, and by the aid of Messrs. Negretti and Zambra a tell-tale thermometer or thermograph has been perfected, and supplied to several of the steamers trading here. Shippers should insist that all steamers carrying dairy and other produce should be fitted with such an instrument. By its means any variation in the temperature would be detected.

Mr. W. B. Walters, who was sent home by the Middle Island Dairy Association to arrange for a more perfect system of ventilation on board vessels carrying produce, has after considerable trouble arranged for several steamers being fitted on his principle; the result of which cannot yet be determined.

The question of grading all produce previous to export, and the providing of cool stores at ports of shipment, are subjects requiring early consideration. It is now recognised by many in the trade well qualified to express an opinion that if New Zealand is to derive the utmost benefit from dairying only the very best butter and cheese should be shipped the way to insure this is by a system of grading.

Plans and specifications: Complete sets of these for the different sizes of cheese- and butter-factories and creameries have been prepared, and are available for distribution to settlers and others.

## LAND-DRAINAGE.

A Bill to provide for the carrying-out of this important matter by the election of special local bodies was presented to Parliament last session, but was not considered. In some parts of the colony a measure of this sort is urgently required, and, as it will be again before Parliament, with some slight amendments suggested principally by those interested, it is to be hoped time will permit of its receiving the attention it deserves.

## NOXIOUS WEEDS.

A Bill has been prepared dealing with this question. The spread of many weeds of a noxious character is becoming alarming, and the necessity for legislation at the earliest possible moment cannot be overestimated.

## STOCK.

The return of sheep on 30th April, 1892, presented last session to Parliament, showed 18,570,752, or an increase of 1,817,000 over the previous year. This large addition may be attributed partly to more correct returns being furnished by sheep-owners. The classification is put down in the returns at—

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Merinoes ... ..	2,600,334	3,501,290	6,101,624
Other breeds ... ..	4,266,777	8,202,351	12,469,128
	<u>6,867,111</u>	<u>11,703,641</u>	<u>18,570,752</u>