

## II. STRUCTURE OF THE SHEEP INDUSTRY

### 1. GROUPS OF THE INDUSTRY

The sheep industry can be divided roughly into three principal sections:—

(i) *The Fine-wool Producer*, whose flocks of Merino, Corriedale, and half-bred sheep roam over very extensive pastures usually consisting of natural tussock grasslands, or danthonia or brown-top dominant swards. The carrying-capacity is usually less than one-third sheep (that is, one sheep to three acres). Both ewes and wethers are run, almost all the lambs being kept to maintain the flock. The product available for sale is almost exclusively wool of a fineness generally ranging from 56 to 64 count, and is produced mainly in the high country of the South Island.

(ii) *The Store Breeder*, whose flocks of Romney, Corriedale, halfbred, or crossbred sheep are carried on semi-improved pastures of danthonia or brown-top with a varying infusion of cocksfoot, timothy, dogstail, rye-grass, and some clover. Carrying-capacity varies from a half-sheep (that is, one sheep to two acres) up to one and a half sheep to the acre or more, depending on the winter feed position. Beef cattle are also carried to eat the surplus growth and to improve and consolidate pastures. Ewe lambs are reared, but wether lambs are either fattened for sale or sold in store condition (that is, for fattening on better country). Five-year-old ewes are culled and sold to the meat-producer to provide his breeding-flock. The products available for sale are (a) wool of 44 count for Romney and up to 58 for Corriedale and halfbred, (b) either fat or store wether lambs, (c) five-year-old breeding-ewes, (d) store or fat cattle.

(iii) *The Meat-producer*, whose flocks almost exclusively of Romney or crossbred ewes in the North Island, or of Romney, halfbred, crossbred, or Corriedale ewes in the South Island, are of breeding-ewes mated to good-lamb-producing rams such as the Southdown, Border Leicester, or Cheviot. They are depastured on improved grasslands mainly of rye-grass and clovers. All lambs are fattened for sale. The meat-producer usually buys five-year ewes from the breeder, takes two-year lambs from them, and sells them fat to the freezing-works. Carrying-capacity varies, but it is usually better than two sheep to the acre. Products available for sale are (a) wool of fineness count 44 for Romney and up to 58 for Corriedale, (b) fat lambs, (c) fat ewes, (d) fat cattle.

(iv) *Inter-dependence of Groups*: It must be appreciated that these are not watertight divisions, and that there are many farms which border between these divisions in varying degrees. The fine-wool producer who runs Merinos seldom has surplus ewes for sale, but those who run halfbreds or Corriedales have some surplus five-year ewes for sale, depending on the location of the property. Similarly, there are "in-between" grades between the store breeder and meat-producer. There is the breeder who fattens some of his Romney wether lambs, and there is the meat-producer who breeds some of his own flock. Although not precise, however, the above definitions are generally well related to the division of interests in the industry.