

sheep have increased by 750,000 since 1925, of which 500,000 are breeding-ewes. Much of the region is subject to heavy rainfall, and this with mild winters, causes pastures to revert easily to fern and manuka. The difficulty of checking this reversion increases on poor soils and on steep areas. Many mistakes were made in the original development of the district, and these have led to large-scale reversion and to the abandonment of holdings, and this has been hastened by economic and financial conditions. Bush sickness contributed to abandonment in Waitomo County. It has taken many years of experience to find what land is likely to be capable of being successfully farmed, and what methods are necessary to farm it. This process is continuing. It is now realized that the use of suitable permanent grass-seed mixtures and the introduction of clovers, particularly *Lotus major*, are the basis of pasture establishment, but in wet areas it is often difficult to secure a good bush burn, which is an essential preliminary after scrub-cutting. Holdings with little or no ploughable land are in difficulties because the wintering of stock becomes a problem, particularly of beef cattle, which are essential for fern-control, but which are not usually a source of profit on this class of country. With the close of the bush-felling period reversion reached a peak, with settlers retreating to the easier and more workable country, which has increased its carrying-capacity and offset the decline on other areas. In the past ten years there has been little further large-scale deterioration and reversion, but the aggregation of holdings into workable units, the appreciation of methods of pasture establishment, and the effective use of run cattle has begun a period of rehabilitation of reverted areas. This has been assisted by the use of cobalt in bush-sick areas. At the same time some districts are not yet regarded as capable of being economically developed or farmed. In recent years progress has been made with top-dressing hill-country areas, and this appears to be a solution for those areas of easy access.

#### (h) Taranaki

This includes the Counties of Taranaki, Inglewood, Egmont, Waimate West, Stratford, Eltham, and Hawera—that is, the coastal plain round Mount Egmont and the broken hilly fringe of the great central plateau. Sheep numbers have increased by 265,000 and breeding-ewes by 204,000. In 1945 about 40 per cent. of breeding-ewes were mated to Southdown rams. The plains have fertile sandy brown loam soils (which have been improved by phosphate and some potash top-dressing, excellent shelter-hedges, and rotational grazing). The back hill country, which was taken up in fairly small blocks about 1910, has deteriorated and been largely abandoned as a result of high rainfall, inadequate fencing and cattle management, and insufficient finance. This area comprises the eastern hill fringes of Inglewood, Stratford, and Eltham Counties. Its fate appears to have been sealed by the depression which occurred just when the settlers were struggling to adapt their methods to the peculiar local conditions and needed financial support. The nearer hill country has remained in a fairly good and prosperous condition through the aid of a little top-dressing and the extra income obtained from the use of dry dairy stock as the cattle beast, the animals being in calf and sold to dairy-farmers in the spring. The region shows a recent slight decrease of dairy-farming in favour of fat-lamb farming, but dairying remains the dominant feature of the region. Some combination of the two is occurring on the hills east of the main road with success and may be pushed back into the hinterland.