

the fringe of hard country along the foothills of the Tararuas. Between these lie the main belt of the Wairarapa—flat to rolling good country, warm and well watered, and benefiting from both improved sown pastures and top-dressing. This part of the region is intensively farmed for fat-lamb production, approximately 27 per cent. of the flocks being Southdown mated in 1945; and most Romney wether lambs being fattened. Breeding-ewes have increased by 101,000 and total sheep by 109,000.

(n) *Featherston*

This region has been designated "Featherston region" although, in addition to Featherston County, it includes the Hutt and Makara Counties. These latter are, however, of little importance to the general picture of sheep-farming. Both have had much of their flatter areas taken for urban housing schemes. Makara County is generally steep, and fully exposed to the cold force of the storms from Cook Strait. Hutt County, with the general exception of the Judgeford and Wainui-o-mata areas, consists of the steep, hard fringe of the southern end of the Tararuas, where difficult conditions, high rainfall, and poor soils have resulted in a reversion to scrub overtaking most of the efforts at development. Featherston County has better land, and a large area of the southern Wairarapa plain is given over to dairying. The rolling downs, particularly round Martinborough, are all first-class intensive areas. The coastal hills are in a different category to those of the Wairarapa and Castlepoint regions. They are steeper and colder on account of exposure to southerlies deflected up the east coast of the South Island, and much more difficult of access. Reversion appears to be greater and pastures generally poorer. Sheep have increased in number by 82,000, made up of an increase of 92,000 in the Featherston, 3,000 in the Makara Counties, and a decrease of 13,000 in Hutt County. Breeding-ewes have increased by 79,000.

(ii) CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH ISLAND FARMING

(a) *Changes in Farming Practices*

Over the past twenty-five years there has been a definite tendency towards the elimination of all breeds other than Romney and Southdown. In 1920, for instance, Lincoln rams accounted for about a sixth of all rams, but their importance rapidly declined until they were less than 5 per cent. after 1924. Once bush-burn fertility declined, the rearing of Lincoln hoggests became difficult, and the substitution of the Romney overcame much of this difficulty and at the same time provided a ewe more suitable for the requirements of the growing fat-lamb industry. Leicester rams were of minor importance, but gave way to Southdowns with the improved quality of the pastures, and after 1930 their numbers have been very small.

There was a steady increase in the importance of Southdown rams, from 8 per cent. in 1920 to 23 per cent. in 1930. The growing overseas demand for fat lambs, together with the improvement of pastures, was primarily responsible for this trend. The use of Southdown rams was increased by the depression, when greater returns were forthcoming from fattening than from wool and store-sheep production, the percentage rising to 33 of all rams in 1933. In 1947 Romney rams accounted for about 66 per cent. of all rams and Southdowns about 32 per cent., other breeds being of no practical significance except the Lincoln, which is used sporadically for strengthening Romney fleeces.