

LAMBS.

The mild and temperate climate of New Zealand favours the production of lamb, so much so that it is possible to grow the very finest quality that can be produced in the world. A parcel of New Zealand lamb was recently sold in New York at the high price of 1s. 5d. per pound, and was pronounced to be the finest-flavoured in the world. The half-bred Down is undoubtedly the superior lamb. It should be grown abundantly, then fattened upon succulent cultivated foods, and marketed in all rich and populous centres of the globe. New Zealand can command profitable markets for her best-quality lamb in the leading cities of Europe and America. A great mistake is made in confining the lamb trade to London. Steps should be taken to exploit other markets at once, especially when American, Spanish, and Scandinavian people are inviting business. It is to the discredit of the colony's directors of the meat industry to find practically no attention given to the marketing of this commodity in any other centre than London.

It appears to me that the frozen-meat companies in the colony confine themselves to the making of a trading profit out of the meat-growers, and are regardless as to whether the meat is poorly or advantageously marketed so long as they can secure a substantial profit for themselves. The reports of Mr. Graham Gow, travelling Trade Commissioner, confirm this view. He says, "Unexploited markets exist in many parts of England, which markets will take wholesale quantities of lamb so soon as the commercial traveller chooses to canvas for business."

CATTLE.

The breed of cattle for the production of which the rich back country of Wellington is famous is the shorthorn. This type is undoubtedly the best that can be used. It suits the dairying as well as the beef trade; therefore both industries can be advantageously worked together while this class of animal is bred.

SYSTEM OF SELLING FAT STOCK.

The system under which freezing companies buy fat stock from farmers is not satisfactory. The companies fix a price per head, and send their buyers into the country to select the stock. The buyer drafts out the animals that are well grown and fat, taking care that nothing undersized is included. This system allows the companies the whole of the advantages of the extra commercial value in the animals that are extra prime and well grown. Farmers are told that heavy prime animals are worth the same rate as ordinary weights for freezing purposes, but they are not told that a more profitable use than freezing is in store for all overfat and overweight stock. It is certainly undesirable to export sheep exceeding 70 lb. weight. This limit should be arbitrarily enforced, because sheep over 70 lb. weight can be put to a more profitable use than freezing by converting the carcass, with the exception of the legs, into tallow and preserved meats. The legs of heavy sheep should be frozen and shipped Home, and will always command satisfactory prices. The by-products of heavy animals are also worth more than those of ordinary weight. At the present time a prime sheep weighing upwards of 80 lb. is worth £1 for other than freezing purposes, while a 60 lb. freezing sheep is worth 16s.

In order to put the selling of fat stock upon a satisfactory footing the system of selling by weight should be adopted. Stock could be selected and approved as regards quality and condition by the freezing companies' buyers, but the price should be determined on the basis of either the live or the dead weight of the stock selected.

HANDLING OF LIVE-STOCK.

Live-stock is not always handled with the care that is absolutely necessary. Bruising and undue raising of temperature while travelling stock from fattening-lands to freezing-works must be avoided. Often inexperienced or careless drovers are allowed to travel stock to railway-stations, and still more negligent people are frequently permitted to roughly handle the stock when loading railway-wagons. Care should always be taken to travel fat stock so quietly that the temperature of the animals shall not be raised to sweating-point. Stock should never be despatched on a railway journey unless such stock has been thoroughly rested and free from the effects of travelling. Loading stock into railway-wagons when the animals are too tired to keep their feet causes horrible cases of sweating, bruising, and smothering—which is gross cruelty to dumb creatures. Stock also suffers in railway-wagons because neglectful persons fail to tally into each pen the number of head for which there is comfortable standing-room, and securely fasten each pen-door so that stock cannot overcrowd. Railway-wagons are not kept clean, which is necessary to insure to animals secure footholds. Engine-drivers frequently throw stock off their feet, causing crushing and indescribable suffering, through suddenly starting or stopping a train. Live-stock should be carefully carried by special trains with a man in attendance. It is almost impossible for the driver of a heavy mixed goods-train to avoid punishing and damaging live-stock. It has not been by any means an uncommon occurrence for the driver of an overloaded train to leave live-stock in wagons on the way-sidings over night. I have known this to frequently occur on the inclines between Paikakariki and Johnsonville, and I have witnessed scores of most horrifying results from such gross neglect. Stringent regulations should be rigidly enforced in connection with the handling of live-stock on railways, if not to avoid commercial loss, for the sake of preventing cruelty. Freezing companies frequently confine stock in exposed and filthy yards during wet weather, and in dry weather neglect to supply drinking-water. Treatment of this sort, besides being cruel, depreciates the quality of the meat when killed. It is all-important to keep the temperature of the blood of animals for slaughter at its normal point. Any variation higher or lower prevents proper "bleeding" when killed, because excited or chilled blood refuses to flow from the flesh-tissues. This causes bone-staik, discolours the flesh, and generally depreciates the flavour and keeping-qualities of the meat.