

SOUTHLAND.

Generally speaking, the weather-conditions during the autumn and winter months were good, and all classes of stock thrived well. The spring was far from satisfactory, cold winds prevailing, which retarded all growth, up to the end of December, after which the weather-conditions were much more favourable, and both grass and cereal crops came away with a rush, with the result that large numbers of fat lambs, sheep, and cattle were frozen during January, February, March, and April. Fat cattle, sheep, and lambs realized good prices, cattle averaging from £1 14s. to £2 3s. per 100 lb., sheep £1 to £1 13s. each, and lambs 6½d. per pound. In sympathy with these prices, all classes of store stock sold well, more especially forward store cattle, wethers, and lambs. Breeding-ewes were also in good demand, selling from 15s. to £1 5s., according to age and breeding.

The lambing returns on the farms and lower country averaged from 80 to 120 per cent., but on the higher country and pastoral runs the percentage was far from satisfactory, being in most cases only 50 to 70 per cent.

Mainly owing to the increased demand caused by the outbreak of war, wool has realized exceptionally good prices, averaging from 8d. to 1s. 3d. per pound.

The cold and backward spring militated against the dairying industry, and the returns from cows up to the New Year were far from satisfactory; however, as the season advanced matters improved, and this, with the good prices realized for cheese, it having brought up to 8½d. per pound, has compensated for the bad spring.

The cereal crops, which in the spring were most disappointing, eventually improved in an incredible way, and averaged out at from 40 to 50 bushels, and in some instances reached as high as from 90 to 130 bushels to the acre.

In contrast to many other parts of the Dominion, feed this summer and autumn has been plentiful, and, as the turnip-crops are all fairly good, ample feed for the winter is assured.

RECENT LAND LEGISLATION.

While some of the amendments made under the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1914, are of a general nature, several very important amendments relating to the administration of ordinary Crown lands and settlement lands were made to the existing law. The following is a short account of the more important amendments:—

Section 5, for the purposes of limitation of area of holdings, enacts, in respect of land not classified under the Land Act, that land of an unimproved value of £8 per acre or upwards shall be first-class land; land of an unimproved value of between £4 and £8 per acre, second-class; and land of an unimproved value of less than £4 per acre, third-class land. Further, timber is not included in the unimproved value of timber land. Formerly land of an unimproved value of £4 per acre and upwards was deemed to be first-class; and land of an unimproved value of between £2 and £4, second-class; and land of an unimproved value of less than £2, third-class. It was ascertained in practice that the former law relating to unclassified lands was too restricted and not in the best interests of settlement.

Section 8 provides for the subdivision of Crown pastoral land consisting principally of high country, and disposal of the same to holders of sufficient low-lying land to profitably work the whole.

Sections 17 and 18 allow of the holders of leases in perpetuity of ordinary Crown land and settlement land to acquire the fee-simple of their holdings in all cases.

Section 21 provides for the acquisition of the fee-simple of part only of a small grazing-run in cases where the area of the whole run is greater than the limit allowed.

Section 27 provides that where a pastoral run is subdivided at the expiry of the license the licensee has the right to acquire a new pastoral license over one of the subdivisions, irrespective of the tenure on which the lands are offered. Formerly the tenant only had the right to a subdivision if the lands were leased under the pastoral-license tenure.

Section 28 allows of the granting of leases of settlement land without competition to persons who have been continuously employed on estates purchased for a period of at least five years immediately preceding the acquisition, subject to ordinary area limitations.

Sections 32 and 33 (subject to limitations of holding) permit of the exchange of pastoral licenses to small-grazing-run leases, and small-grazing-run leases to renewable leases respectively.

Section 36 allows of the sale of sand-dunes and other worthless lands at such price as may be deemed advisable, but certain improvements have to be effected before certificates of title can issue.