

1924.
NEW ZEALAND.

LAND FOR SETTLEMENTS ACT, 1908

(REPORT ON THE).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly in compliance with Section 85 of the Land for Settlements Act, 1908.

The LAND PURCHASE CONTROLLER to the MINISTER OF LANDS.

SIR,—

Wellington, 19th August, 1924.

I have the honour to submit the report of the Department for the year ended the 31st March 1924.

Although during the year a number of properties, in various parts of the Dominion, have been placed under offer to the Department for the purposes of settlement, the area purchased has been relatively small. The chief reason for this (apart from entire unsuitability in some cases) is the comparatively high price still being asked by vendors for lands suitable for subdivision. While admitting that the present prices for almost the whole of our exportable primary products justifies a certain amount of optimism, it would be unsafe to venture upon anything approaching a large purchasing policy until export prices are proved to be of a more stable nature. This is perhaps more particularly the case in regard to purely sheep-country, for which at present there exists a considerable demand.

Teviot.

The past season was a very trying one. The autumn was dry and feed scarce. Turnips were practically a failure. A heavy fall of snow occurred in July, which necessitated the out-wintering of eight thousand of the ewes. Half were sent to Clifton and the balance to Moa Flat. To make matters worse, some 3,000 acres of the lambing country was offered by ballot in August with immediate possession. As the ewes were returning early in September, and the successful applicants did not desire to stock up at that time of the season, several of the sections were leased back. Purchasers, however, had to be found for two to three thousand of the ewes, and surprisingly satisfactory prices were obtained. The lambing, as expected, was below the average. The wool, though light, and showing signs of the hard winter, topped the Dunedin sales for 466 bales, averaging over 2s. per pound.

The balance of the station, with the exception of the homestead, was offered in February by ballot, and nearly all taken up by very likely men. The sheep were valued by three competent men, and offered to the successful applicants, who eagerly took them on the conditions laid down. The sections left will be offered in February next.

Mount Pisa.

The weather conditions did not affect this property so much as Teviot. The winter, however, was very severe, and the stock suffered considerably. The snow cleared early, so the sheep were able to get higher up sooner than usual. Lambing was poor, but the sheep came in at shearing-time much better than was expected. The clip was fairly good, and brought full average prices in Dunedin. The property was divided into ten sections, and offered by ballot to soldiers in February last. The whole was taken up. The sheep were valued by three practical men, and offered to the successful applicants, who readily accepted them on the conditions arranged. The weather was wet and foggy during the mustering for delivery, and there are still over three thousand sheep unaccounted for. A good many will still come in. The live and dead stock were sold later.

The rabbits were well in hand in the autumn, and provision was made in the leases to continue the rabbiting until the end of March, 1925. The lessees will thus have an opportunity of getting their fencing and other work done.

Clifton.

The drought which prevailed during the year over Canterbury and part of Otago extended to this settlement. The spring and summer were exceptionally dry and windy, and consequently the white crops and grasses were light, and rape and turnips in many places a failure.