

The 1933 enumeration of ewes, which is now to hand, shows an advance of approximately 147,000 compared with 1932, indicating that the breeding flock should reassert its influence at an early date. The drop in breeding-ewes last year was offset by a favourable lambing of over 2 per cent. higher than in 1931. This increase has facilitated the partial recovery in ewe numbers, and has enabled the industry to kill comparatively heavily, particularly in lambs, during the 1932-33 season. The total figures for the year ended 31st March are 9,718,585 and 8,689,196 lambs slaughtered for 1932-33 and 1931-32 respectively; the sheep totals for the same periods are 3,569,598 and 4,464,894. Thus while lamb slaughterings rose by approximately one million, mature sheep showed a decline of 895,296.

As the financial year includes the latter four months' killings of the previous season it does not truly indicate the flock position as it pertains at the present time. The figures given above would suggest that a greater number of the 1932 lamb crop was slaughtered than for 1931, but this is not the case. Killings from the 1931 lambing were well sustained right up to July, 1932, this being reflected in the figures quoted. The returns now to hand for the seasonal slaughterings as for the year ended 31st July show that lambs killed at meat-works and abattoirs numbered 8,953,009 in 1933, compared with 9,065,752 in 1932, the figures for sheep being 2,921,594 and 4,159,446 respectively for the same periods. These facts, taken in conjunction with a good lambing in 1932, suggest that the flock position in 1934 should be materially improved.

The details of mutton and lamb exported during the year ending 31st March show a comparatively sound position. The quantities exported indicate that there was a carry-over from the previous season's killings. Lamb carcasses totalling 2,774,458 cwt., and valued at £6,585,743, were exported in 1932-33, compared with 2,243,609 cwt., valued at £5,749,076, in 1931-32. The relative figures for mutton were 1,244,338 cwt., valued at £1,419,832, in 1932-33, and 1,105,322 cwt., valued at £1,408,982, in the previous season. Restrictions of meat imports into Great Britain, combined with the internal exchange position, should be reflected in prices expressed in New Zealand currency during the ensuing season.

For some years past there has been a feeling among the sheep farmers and breeders of the Dominion that the quality of our wool is not all that can be desired. A realization that the suitability of the sire is the true basis of any improvement in wool has led to an agitation culminating in the foundation of a committee to formulate plans and proposals calculated to bring about the desired improvement. The outcome of this movement is as yet uncertain, but must be watched with interest by those concerned for the future of the industry.

The position of beef production in the Dominion's farming programme has attracted some attention consequent upon the successful trial shipments of chilled beef made during the year. The increase in breeding-cows of beef type during recent years has naturally led to an advance in killings, as reflected in the season's slaughtering of 354,271 cattle, compared with 269,916 during the season ending July, 1932. Should a chilled-beef trade be developed, however, it is questionable to what extent our present stock can be considered suitable. Undoubtedly greater attention will need to be paid to beef type, and in this connection breeding-bulls must receive special consideration. Any extensive development of export of chilled beef of a type other than that represented by our present supply must of necessity take some years to build up. In anticipation of such a development, information is required as to the returns to be secured from moderately young specially bred beef cattle raised on high-yielding pastures of a dairying type. It has been proved in the past that returns from lamb meat can be favourably compared with returns from milk produced on the same type of pastures. The question arises as to whether chilled beef from stock somewhat younger than that at present being frozen can similarly compete. In this connection, many areas of high-class dairying pastures at present inadequately fenced and watered for dairy cows is suitable for rapid production of beef, but it is necessary to know the returns to be secured per ton to grass consumed.

An interesting and far-reaching movement associated with the price depression is evidenced in the tendency for horses to replace tractor power. The demand for working-horses has resulted in an acute shortage and high prices being paid for the animals offered. This movement is actually the tangible evidence of the recognition by farmers that expenditure in farm management which can be largely credited to the farm itself is an effective method of bridging the gap between production cost and realized prices. The outstanding instances which may be quoted are the production of feed for horses rather than the purchase of benzine and oil; the almost general replacement of culled dairy stock by heifers reared on the farm; and the gradual trend towards the breeding of weaner pigs rather than purchase from other breeders at high prices.