

Something About Contingent Horses.

The pictures we give on this page represent some snap shots taken at the Waikato State Farm, near Hamilton, where some 150 horses for the Eighth Contingent were assembled prior to their shipment on board the troopship Surrey, which left Auckland on February 1st last. Here, where we inspected them, Mr E. Clifton of the Agricultural Department, had assembled his purchases, and at the time of our visit they were enjoying the best times the poor animals were likely to have for many a long day. These horses were in various grass paddocks on the farm, and were being fed liberally on oats and good chaff in feeding troughs set up in the field, as shown in one of our pictures in this issue. We entirely agree with Mr Clifton in his idea that a horse intended for military service in South Africa should be put on board the troopship in as good fettle as it is possible to have him. There is no economy in saving feeding expenses at this end, and thus rendering the horses less capable of sustained work on effort when they get to the front. They will not stand exposure, hard work, and short rations any better, but very much worse, by being scurvy-treated while there is no difficulty in doing them well. Horse feed and grass is cheap and plentiful in New Zealand, and we were glad to see these 150 contingenters putting on good hard, healthy condition in the Waikato paddocks, thus building up their constitutions to stand the strain of the sea voyage and the subsequent hardships of the campaign in South Africa. The health and strength of the horses of a mounted corps are as important to efficiency as the health and strength of the troopers that are to ride them.

Well, the Contingent horses at Ruakura were, without doubt, a fine lot of animals on the average. There certainly was some want of uniformity of stamp, which is only to be expected when there is no systematic breeding of military remounts in this country. One of the finest horses of the lot was a fine upstanding bay, about 15.1 in height, with a great girth, a good shoulder, and nine inches of good flat bone below the knee. He was from the King Country, six years old, and probably Maori bred. He was a bit raw and timid, having evidently been very little handled or ridden, with splendid feet as hard as iron, which had never been shod. He had a plain, bold-looking head, but he carried it well and showed courage and power all over. He probably had thoroughbred blood in him, but though fast and active as a pony, there were more evidences of strength and good constitution about him than of what is known as "quality." We give a portrait of him which does not flatter him by any means.

The youth who rode the horses for trial purposes was a typical colonial rider, quiet, calm and fearless, and able to stick on anything on four legs. He was evidently disappointed at the absence of some good buckers amongst the mob, so that his capabilities of sticking to the pigskin might be properly displayed. We only saw one mild attempt at bucking amongst the whole lot, but as a rule the real buckjumper is rare in New Zealand, although now and then one comes across some real artists at the game.

At the Ruakura Farm the selected horses were getting good heart into them, with two or three feeds a day of chaff and oats, mixed in the proportion of 20 bags of chaffed oatsen sheaves to 6 bags of good oats, besides the grass they could pick up, and they were shipped on board the Surrey in capital condition to stand the voyage as all horses should be which are sent to Africa for active service. Each horse was shod on the forefeet, to prevent injury to the hoofs by stamping and pawing on board ship. One of our pictures shows the shoeing smith at work, the job being well and expeditiously carried out at the farm by Mr Slade, of Hamilton.

LUNCH TIME.



WAITING TO BE SHOD.



A FEW GOOD ONES.



A "MOKE" FROM THE KING COUNTRY.



THEIR LAST DAYS ON NEW ZEALAND PASTURE.

Waikato Horses for the Eighth Contingent.