

GRAZING OF LUCERNE.

EXPERIMENTS AT MOUMAHAKI EXPERIMENTAL FARM.

IN the brief history of lucerne-cultivation in this country the grazing of it has not yet been tested. Now, however, an experiment is being conducted at Moumahaki Experimental Farm to determine the best means of grazing an established field by both cattle and sheep. The field where the trial is being made has been in lucerne for two years and a quarter, and the plant is there thoroughly well established. After the first cutting of this season 525 head of sheep (ewes and lambs) were turned in on the 7 acres. At this time the lucerne was 18 in. in height—rather high for feeding off, the wet weather which prevailed having made it necessary to postpone the stocking. The sheep, not being accustomed to the rich feeding, were not kept continuously on the lucerne for the first few days. They were taken off after two hours' feeding the first day, on the second day they had four hours' grazing, and on the third day they were allowed to remain in the field. The sheep rapidly improved in condition, and on the tenth day, the lucerne being eaten down to a safe height, about 2 in. above the crown, the sheep were taken off. When put on the lucerne the sheep were in forward condition, and the bulk of them were fit for freezing when taken off. After seven days, the lucerne having recovered sufficiently, 300 lambs, just weaned, were turned on, and remained for a period of seven days, being taken off after a few hours' feeding for the first few days, as with the first lot. The lambs were followed by 260 ewes, which remained on the lucerne for seven days. The field remained without stock for seven days, and the 260 ewes were returned and depastured for another week. After this seven young bulls were turned on, and remained for ten days. The field was then closed up. As far as the eye could see, there was no deleterious effect on the plant, which is growing as vigorously as before. The 7 acres are now being subdivided, and experiments to test the gain in weight in fattening will be carried out.

During February the three main experimental farms of the Department were visited by 1,270 farmers. Ruakura Farm of Instruction attracted 735, Moumahaki Experimental Farm 460, and Weraroa Experimental Farm 75.