

difficult to obtain every year. This means that prices are increasing correspondingly, hence there is a growing difficulty of maintaining half-bred flocks which have been, in the South Island in particular, the foundation of our crossbred flocks both for wool and mutton.

When it is remembered that of the world's supply of crossbred wool New Zealand takes the lead for quality (a fact freely admitted by the trade), it behoves us to endeavour to maintain this enviable position. Can we do so? Judging from what has been accomplished, everything points to a steady improvement in the best grades of this class of wool, and credit is due to the flockowners who, with careful study and long experience in mating their sheep, assisted by the suitability of the soil and favourable climatic conditions, have brought about the existing high standard of our crossbred wool. Notwithstanding the fact that the Merino is decreasing in numbers, the nature of large pastoral areas is such that it may reasonably be expected that a sufficient number of Merino sheep will always be maintained to keep up the foundation so essential to the highest grades of this wool.

THE RAM TO LOOK FOR.

The fact that the ram is the dominating factor in deciding the destiny of the flock suggests to those just entering upon pastoral pursuits, or to some who may have fallen victims to the results of indiscriminate mating, the importance of the question how to select a ram. A few points regarding some of the most popular breeds and crosses is given at the end of this article, but a few of the more important features bearing on the selection of flock rams of any breed might be given here, viz.: The ram should be purebred and true to type, with a strong, bold carriage; of a decidedly masculine character, showing marked individuality and uniformity; of a medium-sized build without a tendency to be undersized; well set on his legs, indicating strength and thriftiness; well ribbed up, with deep full quarters and well-developed thighs both inside and outside. The head should be decidedly masculine, being at the same time clean and full of character, and should be carried on a powerful neck, well set into the shoulders. A weak neck should never be tolerated. The eyes should be bright and reasonably prominent, with nothing sluggish in their appearance; *in short, he should be a ram, every inch of him.* The wool should show density of fibre, good length of staple, and be of as uniform quality all over the body as can reasonably be expected, with as little tendency to coarseness about the thighs as possible. Every ram should be carefully examined before purchase for the presence of hair on any part of the body and promptly rejected if showing signs of kemp. *Never buy an old ram.*