

LAMB-BREEDING FOR THE MEAT TRADE.

WHITE-FACED BREEDS AND CROSSES.

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IN the *Journal* for January last (page 50) were published some notes by the writer on the Down breeds and crosses for the fat-lamb trade. Other sheep breeds and crosses represented in New Zealand are dealt with in the present article.

It will be well to emphasize, in the first place, the importance of selecting breeds or their crosses suitable to the climatic and land conditions of the locality or farm. A great deal depends on whether the land is heavy or light, swampy, arable, or tussock, or bush-burn country, and so on. Raising sheep or lambs under conditions which are in their favour will, as a rule, yield satisfactory returns, whereas the reverse will be the result if it is attempted under conditions which do not allow the sheep a fair chance of doing the best they are capable of. The consumer is not concerned about the breed of the lamb or mutton he buys, but looks for meat of good quality and colour, with a large proportion of lean.

In New Zealand we have several of the white-faced, longwool breeds—namely, Romney Marsh, Lincoln, English Leicester, Border Leicester, and Wensleydale. Cotswolds and Cheviots were kept some years ago, but it was found that conditions did not suit them, and their breeding was consequently abandoned. Rams from each of the breeds named were mated with Merino ewes in several provincial districts, with the object of ascertaining which cross would produce lambs with a carcass most suitable for the frozen-meat trade.

LINCOLN CROSSES.

The Lincoln ram mated with the Merino ewe produced good results, the progeny being called half-breds. The lamb is of good frame but compact, and, although it takes more time to fatten when compared with some other lines, this cross is greatly in favour in one or two important sheep districts. If not sold as a fat lamb the animal usually develops into a fine hogget, and cuts a good fleece of shafty combing-wool. If topped off after shearing it will make a good freezing carcass, and always sells well. The ewes of this cross are always of value, as, having normally a very sound constitution, they grow into a really good line.

This class of ewe can be mated with a half-bred ram if it is desired to keep to the half-bred line, but, if desired, ewes can be mated back to the Lincoln ram. The progeny from the latter crossing is termed three-quarter-bred—that is, three-fourths longwool and one-quarter Merino. This is a good line, but, coming back to the longwool, the meat is somewhat coarser in the grain than that of the first cross. Experience, too, shows that the three-quarter-bred takes longer to fatten than the half-bred.