

COLOURED FIBRES SCATTERED THROUGH THE FLEECE.

A fault that is said to be increasing considerably in the slipe wool from our meat-freezing works is the presence of coloured fibres scattered through the wool. This results from the marked increase in recent years of the use of Southdown sires for the fat-lamb trade. The primitive sheep, from which some of the modern breeds are descended, were frequently coloured, and remnants of this colour are still to be seen in the face and leg colourings of such breeds as the Southdown, Shropshire, and Suffolk. Where careful selection is not practised there is a tendency for these coloured fibres to appear, scattered throughout the fleece. This has happened in some cases in New Zealand owing to the popularity of the Southdown resulting in its passing into the hands of some breeders whose only object is to breed rams to get fat lambs. Some manufacturers have urged that we should use Corriedale, Dorset Horn, or Ryeland rams instead of the Southdown. Neither the Ryeland nor the Dorset Horn are so prepotent for siring early maturing and idcal-carcassed fat lambs, while the Corriedale is at the best only a dual-purpose breed, suitable for a limited class of country.

This is a case where wool and mutton interests are in conflict, and, while the wool with the brown fibres scattered through it cannot be used for white or cream goods, it is quite suitable for some other lines. For this reason it is worth nearly as much per pound as wool free from defects. The return for wool from a fat lamb is only a small part of the total return, and so the fat-lamb producer cannot afford to gain a few pence by wool-improvement and lose a few shillings owing to slower maturity and deterioration of his lamb carcass. If more attention were paid to the breeding of Southdowns free from this defect it should help the fat-lamb raiser to obtain a little extra for his lambs.

Other manufacturers complain that in some of the Hawke's Bay and Poverty Bay Romney-cross clips there is a tendency for patches of grey wool to creep in. This grey wool is probably due to an admixture of black and white fibres, and can only result from careless breeding practices. Since this class of coloured fibre can have no effect on the fat-lamb trade, every endeavour should be made to eliminate those sheep showing the fault, and care should be taken when the selection of the breeding-stock is being made.

LENGTH OF WOOL IN RELATION TO SPINNING COUNT.

In an endeavour to obtain the greatest weight of fleece there has been a tendency on the part of some New Zealand breeders of Corriedales and fine-wooled Romneys to produce a wool which, according to the manufacturer, is too long for its spinning count. Crossbred wool—that is, wool other than Merino—is broadly classified into (1) preparing wools, which are longer than 6 in. (the length may depend to a certain extent on the count), and (2) carding wools, which are too short to go into the former group. The reason for separating the wool into these two groups is because a preparing machine has been designed to disentangle the long wool fibres and lay them parallel ready for combing, without the excessive breakage that would occur if these wools were carded. At the present time very little preparing tops of a 50's count or finer are being manufactured, with a consequence that long wools which come into this category have to be carded.