

## A POVERTY BAY HILL-COUNTRY FARM . . .

ewes are culled for wool and the inferior-woolled sheep, usually about 500, are put to Southdown rams for fat lambs. The ewes culled for wool are specially marked and are never allowed to return to the breeding flock. It is the practice to allow all 2-tooths that have been retained for breeding to run with 2- and 4-tooth Romney rams for a season, after which they are again culled for wool and the culls specially marked.

**Tupping:** Usually the rams are put in a small hill paddock, but for two or three weeks before being put out they are flushed on a good flat paddock and are specially fed on crushed oats and chaff. Before the rams go out the ewes are lightly crutched. The first rams are put out during the first week in March, but, as it is usual for the majority of ewes to come in season from about March 16 to March 20, only 1 ram to every 100 ewes is run for the first fortnight. The first rams out, which are not the most virile, are then removed and selected rams put out at the rate of 2 to 100 ewes. The rams remain with ewes until the end of April, and right up until the last fortnight any ram showing the least sign of weakness is removed and replaced. During this period the reserve rams are still specially fed.

**Crutching:** The main crutching is carried out in May, when all the breeding ewes are crutched and the

2-tooths are flanked to facilitate suckling.

**Handling of In-lamb Ewes:** About July 20 breeding ewes are mustered, handled, and divided into three mobs—(a) Those well in lamb and likely to lamb early; (b) Those a little backward and likely to lamb later; and (c) Those probably empty.

The ewes considered to be empty are stocked up to the rate of 2½ to 3 sheep to the acre and the in-lamb ewes are kept in their two classes and spread more thinly on the better pastures. Dividing the flock in this manner greatly assists lambing and docking.

**Lambing:** Lambing is very slow until about August 15 or 16, but the majority of ewes usually lamb before the end of August, and there is generally a lull until mid-September, when the final lambing takes place.

**Docking and Marking:** With this system of lambing, docking is spread out and it is found that normal labour is sufficient. Portable docking yards of hessian and hurdles are used and it is always the practice to dock lambs back into their own paddocks. This lessens upset and risk of mismothering. Precautions against infection are taken by the use of antiseptics throughout the entire docking process.

During docking a careful check is made for dry ewes and these are removed. All lambs are marked.

**Drenching and Licks:** In April and May lambs and hoggets are drenched, and stock lick is placed out in all paddocks.

The selected breeding ewes are handled in big mobs after culling, with the exception of those in low condition or suffering from foot-rot. Low-condition ewes are placed in good paddocks until their condition improves, and those with foot-rot are segregated and treated until cured. The cull ewes for sale are given the best available feed until fattened, and are disposed of during January and February. Lambs are classed for sex and condition, and forward wethers are put on rape or clover for finishing. The backward lambs of both sexes are given a good hill paddock.

In May all surplus sheep are disposed of, broken-mouthed ewes, 2-tooth wethers, and most of the wether lambs being fattened and sent to the works. The ewes are then drafted into their winter paddocks at about 1½ to the acre and remain there until they are mustered for lambing in August.

The flats are not used for lambing, but in the autumn they are used for topping off cattle that have been brought into forward condition on the hills. When the flats are closed to the cattle they are stocked with hoggets at 7 or 8 to the acre, after provision has been made for grazing by bulls and killers, and the growing of crops. The hoggets graze the small flat paddocks in rotation and when the strong, spring growth commences these



Pedigree white clover pasture.