



Care of Sheepskins from the Farm to the Store

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AT least half of the skins of sheep killed by the farmer and the country butcher in New Zealand are classed as "dead" or "damaged," despite the fact that, when they are removed from the sheep, they are potential "abattoir" grade skins. To reduce this loss a little more time and a great deal more care must be spent in preparing sheepskins on farms. To the farmer who does not know how to prepare sheepskins correctly this article explains common faults and how to avoid them; to the farmer who does not care it shows that he is losing a large profit from an important product of the farm.

THE sheepskins bought by the Sheepskin Control each year are made up of the following classes:—

- 52 per cent.: abattoir quality.
- 16 per cent.: country skins.
- 18 per cent.: slightly-damaged skins.
- 14 per cent.: dead and badly-damaged skins.

Abattoir grades are from abattoirs, or are other properly-butchered skins of good shape, well taken off, free from excessive fat, and properly dried. They are invariably fresh and maintain their original bloom.

Country grades are mostly farmers' skins, sound, but neither as spready nor as good in shape as the abattoirs', and frequently semi-stale.

Damaged skins are those with slight defects, such as cuts, scores, off-shapes, and sweated butts or necks.

Dead and badly-damaged skins include those damaged by weevil, rat-eaten skins (but not badly enough to be classed as broken), and skins with excessive fat.

The 18 per cent. slightly-damaged skins, representing about 400,000 skins and 2,864,800lb., are for the most part skins which would have been sound but for avoidable damage caused by bad butchering, careless handling, or damage by pests. A considerable proportion of skins classed as dead and damaged would also be of greater value if they had been treated with more care.

There is no reason why a farmers' sheepskin, if properly taken off and correctly dried, should not be equal to the abattoir standard, and thus bring up to 5s. more. Apart from dead skins, which are estimated at about 5 per cent. of this classification, and, say, 5 per cent. for unavoidably-damaged skins, it should be possible to get "abattoir" grade for all skins.

Abattoir-quality skins are sold at a premium of about 1d. a pound above the country-grade prices in the price chart.