

Livestock and Farm Management

The Romney is by far the dominant sheep breed; 89 per cent. of all rams used are Romneys and this illustrates that the Gisborne-East Cape area is a Romney breeding district rather than a district for the production of fat lambs. Ewes surplus to requirements, amounting to 250,000 to 300,000, find a ready market in the Waikato and Bay of Plenty and are disposed of in January or February. Most of the male progeny are fattened within the district as lambs or 2-tooth or 4-tooth wethers.

The Southdown is used to a varying extent for the fat-lamb trade. Fat-lamb raising is most widely practised in Cook County, where 18 per cent. of the rams are Southdowns. The bulk of the Southdown-cross lambs are fattened on the hill country where they are bred, the tail-end lambs being fattened on dairy farms or mixed-cropping farms on the Gisborne flats. Uawa County has the lowest percentage of Southdown rams (2 per cent.), while Matakaoa, Waiapu, and Waikohu Counties have 5 per cent., 6½ per cent., and 10½ per cent. respectively. In these counties the lambs are fattened by being carried lightly on the better paddocks of the holdings.

Lincoln, Border Leicester, and Ryeland breeds account for less than 1 per cent. of the total sheep and are of no economic significance. With the present outlook of quantity rather than quality of export lamb, the Border Leicester is coming into favour to a limited extent as a fat-lamb sire.

Although the area can be described broadly as breeding country, dry-ewe and wether numbers are 20 per cent. and 24 per cent. respectively of the breeding-ewe totals in Waiapu and Uawa Counties. A proportion of the inland country in these two counties is steep and of low fertility and wethers are used to help crush fern and secondary growth.

Beef Cattle

Beef cattle are playing an increasingly important part in the farming of the hill country of the district. With fertility declining pastures are becoming more difficult to control for sheep, and because of this, run cattle numbers are being increased.

FARMING IN GISBORNE-EAST CAPE DISTRICT



Cattle numbers have increased considerably in the Gisborne-East Cape district in the past 25 years and the ratio of beef cattle to sheep now ranges between 14 and 17.5:100.

Farming on the hill country is, for practical purposes, grassland farming, as supplementary fodder crops do not aggregate .01 per cent. of the area. As a rule there is plenty of feed in spring and autumn. Growth comes almost to a standstill during winter and the aim in management is to dispose of all surplus stock in early autumn and to enter the winter with a carryover of autumn growth. In drought summers there is a general shortage of feed and cattle numbers have to be reduced.

Pasture management on most holdings consists of putting in a particular paddock in autumn the estimated number of sheep it will carry and leaving them there until weaning time (December to January). Any surplus growth is utilised by rotational shifting of cattle.

The farming land may be divided into 3 main sections: High hill country, medium hill country, and flat land.

High Hill Country

The high hill country occupies 600,000 acres and consists of the foothills of the ranges. On the upper fringe is the main-range forest, consisting of tawa, beech, rimu, totara, rewarewa, matai, kohekohe, wineberry, five finger, and supplejack. The contour of the cleared country is variable, there being steep and rugged faces interspersed with rolling country. Most of the area is 2500ft. high, elevation being lost toward the sea. In places where a good primary burn was not obtained stumps and tree trunks litter the ground, hinder stock management, and act as good cover for secondary growth. Fern and scrub come in fairly strongly on much of the area, particularly on the steeper faces. The instability of the country can be gauged from the fact that in places hundreds of acres are slipping.

Because of the steepness, elevation, and relatively low carrying capacity of the country, holdings necessarily are large and families on the farms are remote from shopping and entertainment centres. This isolation makes the keeping of good permanent labour a problem. Access to back stations, which are usually served by clay roads, is not good and the bulk of the farming supplies has to be brought in during summer. Transport costs are high, which makes the application of much-needed phosphate very expensive.

Climate

Because of elevation winter temperatures in the high hill country are cold, but not sufficient to produce snow conditions. Snow is consistent only on

TABLE 2—UTILISATION OF LAND, AND STOCK CARRIED IN GISBORNE-EAST CAPE DISTRICT, 1947-48*

	Counties					Total
	Matakaoa	Waiapu	Uawa	Waikohu	Cook	
Total acreage ..	188,800	507,520	167,040	678,400	506,240	2,048,000
Acreage occupied ..	145,628	427,167	151,304	545,989	489,028	1,729,116
Number of holdings ..	199	525	127	416	1,064	2,331
Acreage sown in grass ..	103,695	356,190	131,916	452,101	423,240	1,467,142
Acreage in green-fodder and root crops ..	35	353	60	1,235	1,401	3,084
Acreage cut for hay and silage ..	93	301	126	1,060	2,032	3,612
Acreage in maize for threshing ..	35	345	127	505	2,638	3,650
Acreage in cash crops, excluding maize for threshing ..	—	187	452	421	1,878	2,938
Acreage in market garden ..	—	9	—	5	425	439
Total sheep ..	110,094	436,909	217,797	608,202	695,902	2,068,904
Breeding ewes ..	60,889	240,671	119,436	347,509	420,978	1,189,483
Total cattle ..	21,351	67,056	28,626	100,952	101,146	319,131
Dairy cows in milk ..	1,825	4,355	1,556	3,677	8,509	19,922

* Figures from "Statistical Report on Agricultural and Pastoral Production, 1947-48".

TABLE 3—KILLINGS AT FREEZING WORKS

Year	Beef	Bobby calves	Pigs	Sheep	Lambs
1945 ..	15,643	9,208	10,653	196,172	285,193
1946 ..	18,350	9,045	8,291	255,172	351,569
1947 ..	19,320	9,618	6,787	176,782	335,692