



A fine old home near Waitangi, Chatham Islands.

[National Publicity

to New Zealand and sold at Addington fetch good prices, thus indicating that they are a desirable type. Lambing percentages average somewhat under 80 per cent.

There has been a steady increase for some years in total sheep carried, the number shipped from the island, and the amount of wool produced, but potential production is far in excess of what it is at present. In most respects farm life and work differ little from that of sheep farmers in the back country of New Zealand. Chatham Island farmers have no ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*), broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), tauhinu (*Cassinia leptophylla*), hard fern (*Paesia scaberula*), or manuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*) to worry about. One small plantation of manuka exists and further reference to it is made in the section dealing with weeds.

In an unpublished departmental report (April 1951) A. G. Brash and A. Forrester, Veterinarian and Principal Inspector respectively of the Department of Agriculture, Christchurch, indicated that though stock health generally was fairly good, it might be improved by better pasture management and by maintaining a higher and more uniform level of feeding.

For several decades cattle were tolerated only for their use as implements to control fern and scrub and consequently a large-boned, long-horned, nondescript type developed, but since the increased demand for beef has made cattle raising more attractive a marked improvement has

been achieved by using imported Polled Angus bulls. This change has not been accomplished easily, and periodically farmers have to wage war on wild mongrel bulls. Wild cattle have little respect for fences and on large stations where native bush provides adequate shelter the destruction of all unwanted bulls will take time. This problem does not exist on more intensively farmed properties, where most of the store cattle for export are raised.

The closing of a small cheese factory at Te One about 16 years ago marked the end of the dairying industry on the island. Diminishing supplies of milk, increased operating costs, and the inadequacy of seasonal labour forced the proprietors to cease manufacturing cheese. The dairy farmers had no alternative to disposal of their herds and adoption of sheep farming. Nevertheless there are still about 100 dairy cows on the island and milk and cream are plentiful on most farms. Though a fair amount of butter is made on some farms, large quantities are imported from New Zealand.

Cropping was more widely practised in former years than it is today. Supplementary feed is provided to a limited extent by turnips, swedes, chou moellier, and cereals, but little hay is made. A small paddock of lucerne on one farm indicates that it might be grown profitably on many others. Most farms are fairly well watered by streams or lagoons.

Pastures

From what early botanists wrote it seems that there were only a few native and endemic grasses on the island and as the country was densely forested, except on the inhospitable peats, it is presumed that grasses were rare, both in number of plants and species, at the time of exploration.

Today the position is quite different. Forests have been cleared and in their places pastures composed largely of exotic species dominate the landscape. Probably the first importations of grass and clover seeds were made from England, Europe, Victoria, or Tasmania in the early years of settlement, but there seems to be no authentic record of the first attempts to establish pastures on Chatham Island. Perhaps the first occurred at mission stations after the forests had been felled and burnt.

Some of the old residents assert that thousands of acres of forest land were cleared and never sown in grass. It was soon learnt that when the bush was felled and the light reached the ground grasses established readily without sowing of seed. Felled trees, mainly softwoods, rotted quickly and burning was not the regular practice as it was in New Zealand.

Pastures Types

There is a wide variety of pasture types, which range from comparatively simple associations to quite complex ones.

First, there are those composed predominantly of ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), crested dogstail (*Cynosurus*