

## On the Land

### GENERAL.

No part of the world, states Mr. Macpherson of the Agricultural Department, is more adapted to lucerne growing than is New Zealand. The plant can be grown in the driest seasons and in the most unlikely of soils without the assistance of irrigation, but where irrigation is necessary in this country there is abundance of water. The plant will not grow on wet or sour soil. It thrives on dry, poor country, where nothing else will grow well, this being the result of the great penetrating power of the roots, which have been known to go in one instance 129 feet below the surface.

The manager of the Taieri and Peninsula Company informs the *Oamaru Mail* that the supply of milk to the Awamoko Creamery at the present time is about 50 per cent. above the quantity dealt with at this time last year. Since the beginning of April the creamery has been receiving milk on three days a week, whereas last year two days sufficed to cope with all that was offering. Strange to say, the supply has been increasing steadily during the past month, and this is accounted for by the fact that some of the cows are now 'coming in.' There is every indication that the creamery will keep open through the winter months.

There were only medium entries in all departments at Burnside last week. Fat Cattle.—A medium yarding, 124 being penned. Prices, on account of the small yarding, were firmer by about 20s per head. The quality, on the whole, was only medium. Best bullocks, £16 to £18; extra, £22; medium, £14 to £15; inferior, £11 to £12; best cows and heifers, £12 to £14; extra, £16 17s 6d; medium, £10 to £11; inferior, £8 to £9. Fat Sheep.—A medium yarding; 1023 penned. The quality was only fair. Prices, on account of the small yarding, were firmer to the extent of 4s per head. Best wethers, 32s to 36s; extra, 66s; medium, 27s to 29s; inferior, 23s to 24s; best ewes, 29s to 32s; extra, 38s 9d; medium, 24s to 26s. Fat Lambs.—A small yarding, 543 being penned, the quality being only fair. Competition from exporters was very keen, with the result that prices improved on previous week's rates to the extent of 2s per head. Best lambs, 24s to 28s; extra, 34s; medium, 21s to 22s; inferior, 17s to 19s. Pigs.—A small yarding of fat pigs. Competition was good, and values showed an advance even on the high prices paid last week. Best baconers, to 108s; medium to good, to 90s; best porkers, to 70s; medium, to 60s. There was a medium yarding of stores, and late rates were well maintained. Slips, to 28s 6d; weaners, 12s to 18s.

The general entry of stock at Addington last week was considerably smaller than at the previous week's sale. Store and fat sheep and fat lambs all showed a decided decrease in numbers, and the entry of cattle was also on the small side. Prices on the whole were fairly well maintained. The entry of fat lambs was 1898, as compared with 4708 at the previous sale. Extra prime, 28s; prime, 22s to 25s; medium, 19s to 21s 1d; lighter, 16s to 17s 6d. Fat Sheep showed a rise of 1s per head. Extra prime wethers, 35s; prime, 27s 6d to 30s 9d; others, 22s 9d to 27s; extra prime, 41s 6d; prime, 27s to 32s; medium, 23s to 26s; others, 16s to 22s. Fat Cattle.—340 were yarded, including some pens of excellently-finished and well-grown sorts. Extra prime steers, £24; ordinary, £9 7s 6d to £13; extra prime heifers, £14 12s 6d; ordinary, £8 10s to £10; extra prime cows, £14; ordinary, £6 2s 6d to £9 10s. There was a medium entry of fat pigs. Choppers, £3 10s to £5 6s; extra heavy baconers, to £5; heavy, £3 10s to £4; light, £2 17s to £3 8s; heavy porkers, £2 6s to £2 10s; light, £1 18s to £2 4s. The yarding of store pigs was limited. Medium, £1 4s to £1 10s; small, 16s to £1 3s; weaners, 6s 9d to 8s 6d.

### THE VALUE OF LUCERNE.

Mr. Macpherson, the Government Fields' Instructor for the South Island, in the course of a talk with

a representative of the *Otago Daily Times* with regard to the value of lucerne, stated that a Dominion-wide recognition of the value of the forage, with the hearty co-operation of farmers, in establishing stands on even one-tenth of the area at present under cultivation would increase by 50 per cent. the volume of animal products available for export. What this meant might be gauged from the fact that at the present time the animal products exported totalled in value some £26,000,000 out of the grand total of exports of £31,000,000 as at December 31. No progressive farmer in the Dominion should be satisfied unless he had a well-established lucerne stand on his farm. Lucerne growing was no innovation in the Dominion. It had been grown for 42 years on down lands with clay subsoil on the New Zealand and Australian Land Company's Levels Estate, South Canterbury, and at the Clydevale Estate, Otago. That was in the early days, when the squatter reigned and when vast areas of land were at command, and there was abundance of other feed available for the stock carried. Lucerne, however, was then considered too much of a luxury, and was only used particularly as a food for stud animals. Lucerne was also an established production in Marlborough, where it had become one of the staple crops.

The value of lucerne was first recognised in America, and wonderful development has resulted in the desert areas of California and other parts as a result of its cultivation during the past 50 years, and more particularly the last 12 years. From a few hundred thousand acres a dozen years ago expansion went on rapidly, to a large extent by the application of irrigation, until now there are something like 12,000,000 acres devoted solely to the plant. In the Rocky Mountains, in Colorado, at an altitude of 8000ft, Mr. Macpherson has seen lucerne being cut and baled, and was assured that a great part of what he saw was to be shipped to Australia to feed stock starving as the result of drought. It had first to be railed 1400 miles to San Francisco and then shipped 7000 miles, and one could imagine that the price of food transported such a distance must be high. The lesson was obvious. Argentine also used lucerne extensively, particularly for the purpose of finishing off fat stock. In Canada the Government was giving the utmost encouragement to the growing of lucerne wherever it would prove of benefit, and the result was that at the present time at least 1,000,000 acres were devoted to it.

The trouble about lucerne in New Zealand in the past has been that farmers did not understand how to grow it. Much wrong information has been disseminated from time to time, and the difficulty is now to get people to know how different the process is from the ordinary farm crops. It requires explicit attention in all details during its early growth, and until it is fairly established. Lucerne grows at its best only when it is in exclusive possession of the land devoted to it. Weeds and grass are deadly enemies; the plant fails immediately if the land is allowed to become weedy. When established, lucerne is hardy, but when young it is delicate. It is necessary, therefore, that it should not be sown broadcast. The ground must first be made as free as possible from weeds, well cultivated and brought to a fine tilth. The surface should then be heavily rolled to give a firm seed bed, except in the case of heavy clay land, when it may not be desirable to roll heavily. If a firm seed bed is not given, the land may subside during the early growth and the plant will then die out. The seed should be drilled in in rows not closer than 14 inches apart, these rows being kept straight in order to permit of a cultivator being driven through without injuring the plants. It is important to stir up the soil to let the air in, and also destroy weeds, but the lucerne roots must on no account be injured. The advice to use a disc harrow or tine harrows on a lucerne field is absolutely wrong, as such treatment means the ruin of the crop. About 15lb. of seed to the acre is the correct quantity to sow for fodder in most cases. For seed purposes the rows should be about 24 inches apart, and the seed used should be from 3lb to 6lb the acre.

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