

On the Land

GENERAL.

Recently a good shearing tally was put up at Taihape—namely, 614 two-tooth wethers in eight hours 40 minutes by three men, but it has since been beaten at a Raetihi shed. Three local shearers tallied 626 for a similar time, the individual tallies being 216, 205, and 205 as against 237, 216, and 161.

Experiments in Ireland have shown that 6cwt per acre of superphosphate applied early in spring will destroy moss in pastures. In exceptional cases, where there is a dense carpet of moss, a similar application may be required the following season. The destructive effect is attributed to the acidity of the superphosphate.

An experiment has been carried out in Germany with potash salts to determine to what extent they protect plants from frost injury. The plots treated with kamit remained unfrozen, while the untreated plot was frozen hard. The plants on the treated plots, though looking worse at first, soon recovered, and received no harm from the frost.

The payments made by the Ballance Dairy Company for milk and cream delivered to its butter factories and creameries during December amounted to £8000. This is the largest sum paid by the company in one month since it commenced operations 17 years ago. The company is shipping a large proportion of its output to America. A consignment of 1000 boxes has been forwarded to Vancouver.

The crops, especially the wheat crops (says the *Christchurch Press*), are looking remarkably well in the fields between Kaiapoi and Rangiora. Most of the fields give evidence of heavy yields, though here and there a low-lying field looks sickly. Threshing has already commenced, and should fine weather continue little leading in will be done, as most of the stuff can be threshed from the stook. The late rain has improved the grass very much in the North Canterbury district, especially on the lighter soils where it has suffered from the hot days and scorching north-westers.

There were only medium yardings of fat cattle, fat lambs, and pigs at Burnside last week. The entry of fat sheep was up to the average. The small yarding (131) of fat cattle was keenly competed for at prices fully 10s to 15s per head in advance of previous week's rates. It was a mixed yarding, consisting chiefly of cows and heifers. Quotations: Best bullocks, £13 10s to £14 7s 6d; good do, £11 10s to £12 15s; best cows and heifers, £10 to £10 7s 6d. The bulk of the 2292 fat sheep were medium-weight good butchers' sorts, which were keenly competed for at prices about 2s in advance of previous week's rates. Quotations: Best wethers, 23s 6d to 25s; extra do, to 26s 6d; good do, 21s to 23s; best ewes, 21s to 22s 3d; good, 18s to 20s 6d. Owing to the small entry (310) of fat lambs prices were firmer, some pens being 1s 6d dearer than at last sale. Quotations: Best lambs, 16s 6d to 18s 6d; good, 15s to 16s. The prices for pigs of all sorts showed little change from rates ruling at previous sales.

At Addington last week there was a heavy yarding of store sheep, but very small entries of fat sheep and lambs. Other descriptions of stock came forward in average numbers. Store sheep were in good demand, and fat lambs sold at about previous week's rates, but fat sheep sold at a considerable advance in consequence of the very short yarding. There was an advance in fat cattle. Bacon pigs were easier, but porkers showed no change. There were only 727 fat lambs penned, and they were mostly of medium quality. Best lambs made 16s to 17s 8d; and lighter, 13s 1d to 15s 6d. The yarding of fat sheep totalled a little under 3000, and the supply was barely sufficient for butchers' requirements. The consequence was that prices advanced 2s per head for ewes, and 1s 6d for wethers. The range of prices was: Prime wethers, 20s to 22s 10d; lighter, 17s to 19s 6d; prime ewes, 18s to 22s; others, 15s to 17s 8d. One hundred and seventy-six head of fat cattle came forward. The yarding included

some exceptionally good animals, and the demand, owing to the short supply, was much keener than the previous week, beef showing an advance all round equal to 1s 6d per 100lb. Steers realised £7 17s 6d to £11; extra, £13 5s, £14, and £14 15s; heifers, £5 17s 6d to £11; extra, to £12. Fat pigs were represented by a good entry, but the demand for baconers was easier. Porkers on the other hand were in fair demand. Heavy baconers realised 60s to 65s; medium, 50s to 57s 6d; and smaller sorts, 42s to 48s.

THE SORREL WEED PEST.

Whereas almost every cultivated crop requires a fairly balanced supply of the three principal plant foods—nitrogen, phosphoric acid, and potash—some kinds of weeds seem able to dispense with one or the other of these constituents. This was brought out clearly by the Royal Agricultural Society of England on its experimental grounds, when one field of potatoes was grown with different fertilisers. There were thirteen plots, and it was observed that on two of them there was quite a profuse growth of sorrel. The well-known red tint of the weed was visible from a distance, and distinguished the two plots quite clearly from the rest of the field. What was the cause of this weed development, or, rather, why did it not also spring up on the other eleven plots? And the reason was this. The eleven plots had received different combinations of fertilisers, but all included potash, while the two plots conspicuous with sorrel had received no potash, and the lack of this constituent in the soil had favored the weed at the expense of the cultivated crop of potatoes. On two other plots, which had remained without the application of any fertiliser, the potato crop was poor, and there was little growth of sorrel. It was on the two plots dressed with nitrogen and phosphate of lime, but without potash, that the sorrel was so conspicuous. The soil was sandy, and naturally deficient in potash; but the experiment fully demonstrated the importance of a complete dressing, not only to increase the cultivated crop, but also to check the growth of weeds.

TREATMENT OF FARMYARD MANURE.

If farmyard manure is allowed to remain loose in heaps exposed to the air for months, about 35 per cent. of its total nitrogen is likely to be lost. The extremes are said to be from 20 to 50 per cent. Fully one-third of the total nitrogen lost has been ascertained to be in the elementary form, i.e., uncombined. As the result of experiments, the conclusion has been arrived at that there is no economy in attempting to check the loss of nitrogen in farmyard manure by chemicals, and that the old adage is right: 'Keep it moist and tread it tight, and it will well your care requite.' Layers of soil thrown over the heap from time to time are very useful, as the soil acts as an absorbent for the ammonia and prevents its evaporation.

VALUE OF DEAD LEAVES.

With the nip of the first frosts, the leaves come down; but, although dead, they have not lost their use. Nature returns them to the soil in order that in their decay they may furnish a fresh supply of nourishment. This is a lesson we should not lose sight of, and indicates the wisdom of making use of such material. It has been proved by Grandeau and Henry, two French professors of agriculture, that besides serving as food for earth worms and other organisms, the activity of which keeps the soil porous, friable, and superficially rich in nutritive mineral matter, dead leaves fix atmospheric nitrogen to the extent of 12lb to 20lb per acre annually. To deprive an orchard or garden of its dead leaves is like robbing a farm of its dung.

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